

# DO OR DIE



Voices from the Ecological Resistance

Issue Nine / £3.60

Lay the proud usurpers low!  
Tyrants fall in every foe!  
Liberty's in every blow!  
Let us do, or die!

— Robert Burns

# DO OR DIE

**Do or Die**  
c/o Prior House  
6 Tilbury Place  
Brighton BN2 2GY  
UK

Email: [doordtp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:doordtp@yahoo.co.uk)  
Web: [www.eco-action.org/dod/](http://www.eco-action.org/dod/)

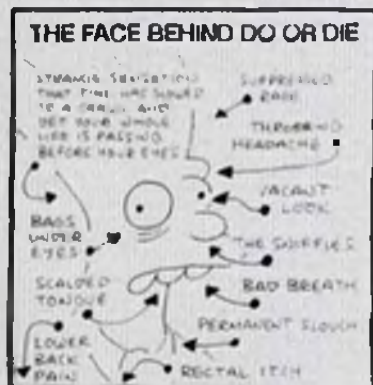
Published annually. This issue  
published in December 2000.

## Orders

For each copy send £5.00 UK or  
£6.00 elsewhere (including  
postage) to the above address.  
Well hidden cash or  
cheques/postal orders payable to  
'Do or Die' only please.  
Bookshops and bulk orders  
should contact us for rates. We  
don't take subscribers but to pre-  
order a copy of *Do or Die* Number  
10 (due out sometime in 2001)  
send us £5.00 UK or £6.00  
elsewhere. Back Issues of *Do or*  
*Die* Numbers 6, 7 and 8 are  
available for £3.00 UK or £4.00  
elsewhere.

## Submissions

Please send your ideas, rants,  
comments, articles, poems,  
photographs, graphics, letters  
and reviews for possible  
publication in the next issue.  
Where applicable send as text  
files on disk with an  
accompanying paper copy.



Anti-copyright

# Uncontents...

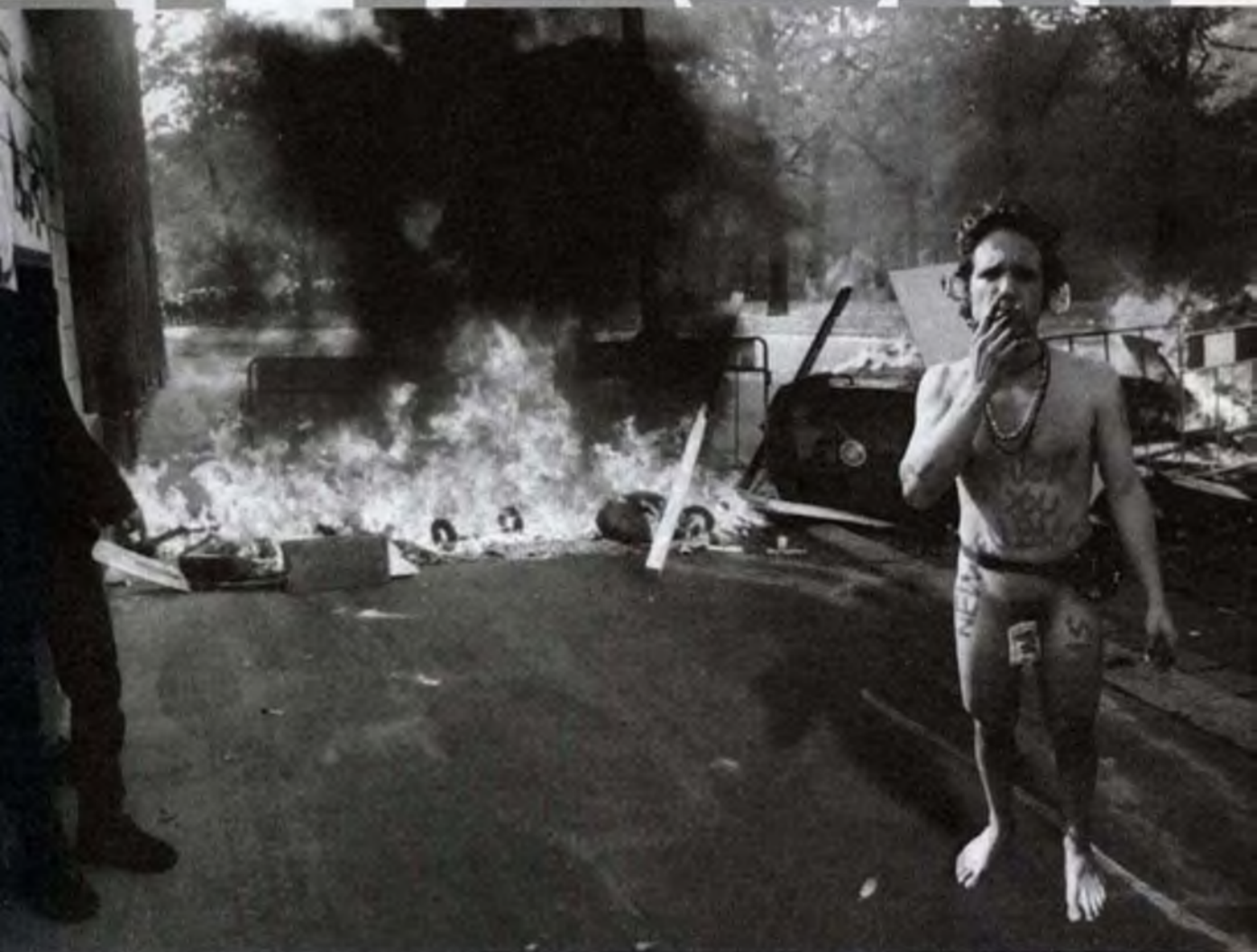
- 1) **On the Attack in Prague! Against the IMF and World Bank**  
News and analysis from the frontlines in Prague.
- 21) **Bashing the GE-nie back in the Bottle**  
Borders no barrier to sabotage. The global fight against biotech.
- 30) **Struggles South of the Pyrenees**  
Reports from radical social movements in the Spanish state.
- 46) **Reflections on Biocentrism**  
Impressions of EF! UK by a roving American.
- 48) **State of Terror**  
Getting to grips with the new Terrorism Bill.
- 63) **Action Stations!**  
An A-Z of top tips for planning direct action.
- 69) **May Day**  
Guerrilla? Gardening? The RTS action in London on May Day.
- 83) **Black Autonomy: Civil rights, the Black Panthers and Today.**  
An interview with two ex-Panthers.
- 101) **Animal Antics**  
Beasts bite back!
- 103) **Running to Stand Still**  
Globalisation, blagging and the dole.
- 110) **The Ballad of the Black Hooded Top**  
Why we shouldn't confuse our politics with our dress sense.
- 111) **November 30th 1999: Resisting the WTO**  
Global resistance: From Seattle to a town near you!
- 140) **It's all Kicking Off!**  
A radical history of football.
- 149) **Carry on Camping**  
News from the UK's direct action camps.
- 154) **Amazonian Adventures!**  
A report from the 1999 Encuentro in Brasil.
- 160) **Give up Activism**  
Now with a new postscript!
- 171) **Rebelling Against our Domestication!**  
Realising our desires and moving towards a feral revolution.
- 173) **The Lowdown on Lockdown**  
Reports from networks striking back against the prison state.
- 179) **The Indomitable Gaul**  
World's greatest prison escapes No.1: Jacques Mesrine.
- 182) **Prisoners of War**  
Listings of UK and international prisoners to support.
- 188) **Redemption**  
A striking and moving cartoon about prisoner Leonard Peltier.
- 193) **Reviews**  
*Against the Megamachine, Beasts of Burden, Wild Britain, Cultures of Resistance, Guy Debord, Elements of Refusal, On Organisation, The Zapatistas, Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left and SchQUALL.*
- 213) **Letters**  
All the news! All the feuds! Your deranged scribbles neatly typed out and given sarcastic subheaders by us.
- 227) **Contacts**  
Pages of contacts so you can get in on the hot group action...

*Do or Die—Riding the Stannah stairlift of bitter experience  
to the granny flat of utter futility since 1992*



# On the Attack in Prague!

## Against the IMF and the World Bank



Thousands of people converged on the Czech Republic at the end of September 2000 for the 55th Annual Meeting of the World Bank Group and the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was taking place in Prague from the 26th-28th September. There were about twenty thousand of the world's bankers, economists and investors; about ten thousand of the world's anti-capitalists, socialists, anarchists and anti-globalisers; and about eleven thousand cops (a quarter of the total Czech police force) trying to stop the one getting to the other...





**It was supposed to be a defining moment for globalised capital—the first time the IMF and World Bank annual meetings had been held in a former Eastern Bloc country. They picked Prague as the jewel in the crown of Eastern Europe—the city most successfully colonised by Western corporations.**

The build-up to 'S26' in Prague was characterised by ever-increasing levels of hype about what was going to happen on the day. The Czech Ministry of the Interior published recommendations to the population to stockpile food and medicines, and to the owners of small shops not to try to defend their businesses from demonstrators. The government encouraged people to leave Prague for the duration of the protests and the city was like a ghost town as about a fifth of the capital's 1.1 million inhabitants followed this advice.<sup>1</sup> All 1,100 state schools in Prague were closed for one week and in many cases families were asked to declare in writing that their children would spend that week outside of Prague. In order to 'protect' young people from the protests.<sup>2</sup> Children, pensioners and students were offered compensation from the IMF conference budget if they agreed to move out of Prague into holiday resorts.<sup>3</sup> Those that did remain were warned not to speak to the protesters. The Mayor of Prague, Jan Kasl, declared that some of the people who were coming to Prague to participate in the protests "will kill if possible, if allowed".<sup>4</sup> The tension generated by all this reached such a level of intensity that Czech President Vaclav Havel said

that the situation was "as if we were preparing for a civil war and looked forward to it being over".<sup>5</sup>

The Czech Republic might not be as rich as some of its Western neighbours, but they certainly weren't scrimping on this one. \$30 million was spent on preparing for the conference on top of the \$90 million already spent on refurbishing the Conference Centre. An extra \$10 million alone was pumped into security for the week.<sup>6</sup>

The Czech Republic has no real history of dealing with this sort of public disorder and so the government was very anxious to demonstrate to the West that they could both manage the situation and still maintain the appearance of a Western liberal democracy. However, instruction in the ways of 'democracy' was on hand: the FBI has recently launched a new office in Prague. And when FBI chief Louis Freeh met with Czech Interior Minister Stanislav Gross, one of the "main topics of discussion during Freeh's visit was the upcoming joint IMF/World Bank annual meeting in Prague in September".<sup>7</sup> The FBI and 600 other foreign specialists, including police from Seattle and Washington DC and many of our own flat-footed friends from Scotland Yard, spent 6 months training their Czech counterparts in surveillance



and riot control.<sup>8</sup> There was even a 'media specialist' from the British plod sent to advise the Czech cops on their PR strategy.<sup>9</sup>

The BiS, the Czech secret police, who specialise in 'anti-activist' disruption and are trained for undercover work, had the number of their agents boosted up to 190 for the duration of the protests.<sup>10</sup> The Czech police had special training camps for months beforehand, training up the necessary thousands of cops and teaching them 'restraint'.<sup>11</sup> On the day the protesters who came faced 11,000 cops backed up with 5,000 soldiers, armoured personnel carriers, troop trucks, fire engines, helicopters, concussion grenades, along with tear gas grenades borrowed from Germany and water cannons borrowed from Greece.<sup>12</sup>

With the Czech Republic being ever conscious of their image with the EU, Western activists were mostly allowed in, but the East European borders were closed a couple of days before S26 and lots of East Europeans weren't allowed through. Also, in the days just before the 26th, a blacklist of known activists prevented large numbers of people from crossing the borders (the Czech government admitted to 200 but the real figure was much higher). The close collaboration of the Ministry of the Interior with specialists from Interpol and the secret services of several Western countries sent in to train the Czech police forces probably helped to create this list, one more piece of evidence of the global character of policing.<sup>13</sup>

## The Plan

The call to converge on Prague in opposition to the World Bank and IMF had been made by a coalition called INPEG, consisting of American veterans of Seattle and Washington DC, some Brits and (surprisingly few) Czechs. The plan to shut down the conference was a simple one. The demonstrators would be divided up into three colour-coded groups that would march in different directions and surround the Conference Centre, blockading it and preventing the delegates from leaving. For some reason we weren't going to try and stop them getting in, as in Seattle, but we were going to try and stop them getting out and going to their evening's entertainment at the Opera.

Various other things happened in the run-up to S26, most of them not really worth mentioning in any detail. There was an impromptu demo in support of the train full of activists from Italy that was held up on the border when some of the people on the train were refused entry, there was the 'Art of Resistance' festival; an illegal anti-fascist demo to counter a legal fascist demo "against the IMF and the left"; a Communist demo organised by the ex-government of Czechoslovakia (!) and a very dull counter-conference.<sup>14</sup>

"Don't worry, they won't get anywhere near us here, there's 11,000 police and only 5,000 protesters. I think we can safely ignore them today"—IMF delegate on the morning of the 26th.<sup>15</sup>

## The Day

By 9.00am on the 26th, thousands had assembled in Namesti Miru (Peace Square) for a Carnival against Capital before beginning the march. However, numbers seemed much smaller than expected. On the day, something like 10,000 people showed up (give or take a couple of thousand) compared to the 20-25,000 that had been predicted.

Maybe this was due to the borders being shut, or people being scared off by all the hype about what a huge confrontation it was going to be, but some of it must have been due to the success of the World Bank/IMF in splitting their opponents and moving some of the more moderate opposition off the streets and into the Conference Centre. There was no recognisable union presence in Prague—in Seattle the numbers were boosted massively by the presence of the unions. Apparently in Prague the unions had been 'included in the process of dialogue'. The conference programme of the IMF/World Bank meetings was full of speakers from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) who had been invited to join the bankers' discussions. Also some NGOs, like Jubilee 2000, which were worried about violence, purposefully held their demonstrations early and removed their supporters before the 26th.<sup>16</sup>

At around noon the crowd split up into groups, each taking a different route to the Conference Centre where the meeting was taking place. The way it worked out, I imagine rather more through people wanting to be together with like-minded friends than through advance planning, was that each of the different groups adopted different tactics. The Pink group included all the socialists and Trots and most of them did their usual thing of marching about with placards and banners, doing their shouting and then fucking off home again as soon as possible without doing anything useful. Some of the remainder of this pink group did stay and divided themselves up amongst the other three groups when their own group dissolved. The Yellow group was headed up by the Italian group Ya Bast!, attempting to break through police lines in padded and protective gear with giant mobile barricades made of inflated inner tubes all lashed together. The Yellow march had the most difficult





approach to the Conference Centre—a head-on assault across a huge road bridge only 30 feet wide but 300 feet high. This bridge is the only northern exit from the Conference Centre and a major traffic artery linking the south of the city to central Prague.<sup>17</sup> This was obviously the easiest point for the cops to defend and the hardest to attack. The Blue group was where the majority of the autonome/anarcho black bloc people were and where the most full-on violence was. They also had a very difficult route of narrow uphill cobbled streets. People hurled rocks, cobblestones and petrol bombs at the police. Officers were divested of their sticks, shields and helmets, which were swiftly turned against them. Support teams kept the front line in ammo and made sure that tear gas canisters were swiftly returned to sender while Seattle's Infernal Noise Brigade played on in the midst of the fighting.<sup>18</sup> The mostly British Earth First!/Reclaim The Streets Pink and Silver march formed an unplanned 500-strong fourth group complete with samba band and Rio-style carnival costumes that went to the south of the Conference Centre and tried to breach police lines there.<sup>19</sup>

Both the Blue and the Pink and Silver groups got within spitting distance of the Conference Centre by finding smaller, less well-guarded entrances with only a few non-armoured-up cops guarding them. But neither group was able to break through, as police reinforcements soon arrived on the scene. Some World Bank delegates tried to sneak out by some of the quieter exits on foot. Protesters soon sent them scurrying back inside, one reporting: "you could see the look on their faces when we sent them back. Their safety bubble had been burst".<sup>20</sup>

Activists operated in clusters of affinity groups, keeping in touch through a sophisticated communications network, in the face of police using water cannons, tear gas, CS gas, rubber bullets and flash-bangs (stun grenades) in large quantities. Groups split off from the main blocks and roamed around the base of the castle-like

Conference Centre, reinforcing other groups where needed.<sup>21</sup> There were baton charges against peaceful protesters, as well as pitched battles between the police and tooled up black bloc affinity group clusters. Despite all this, people were able to maintain blockades around the Centre, locking in the delegates for over 8 hours.<sup>22</sup>

## Evening Entertainment

As it was getting dark, the conference organisers tried to evacuate the delegates on a special underground train from the metro station inside the Conference Centre complex. Ya Basta! activists went and sat on the tracks and stopped it going. A couple of busloads of delegates got out but many of those attending the IMF/World Bank conference didn't get back to their hotel rooms until very late. One protester reports seeing weary delegates finally getting to their hotel: "they were still in their business suits. It was 12 o'clock at night. They had been stuck at the Congress Centre all day".<sup>24</sup>

The protesters moved off into the centre of town to disrupt the evening social events at the Opera House. Thousands of people took over Wenceslas Square—the scene of mass protests when the old regime was overthrown in 1989 and now a gaudy symbol of Western capital's victory in Prague with its overpriced restaurants, McDonalds and 5-star hotels for Western businessmen. Protesters targetted banks and American fast food restaurants and smashed them up.<sup>25</sup> The event at the Opera House was cancelled as it was surrounded by 1,500 protesters and also the banquet for 6,000 delegates attracted attention from the black bloc.<sup>26</sup> There were hardly any police on the streets of Prague Old Town throughout all of this until about 10.00pm when they shipped in another 2,000 cops to add to the 11,000 they already had protecting the Conference Centre. All over the city there were confrontations between police and large groups of demonstrators that went on into the evening.

## The Aftermath

During most of the day the police hardly made any arrests at all, although people carrying medical supplies were targetted and snatched. They started nabbing larger numbers of people later in the evening around Wenceslas Square as numbers in the centre of town dwindled. This carried on into the next day, when large numbers of people were almost arbitrarily picked up off the streets. Police dressed as masked-up protesters were used to start fights within the crowd and to snatch people. There were also similar actions from fascists, supported by the police.<sup>27</sup> Radislav Charvát, the head of the police operation, has admitted there were "several hundred" undercover police on the



demonstrations. According to *Lidové Noviny*, a respected broadsheet newspaper, the majority of them were dressed like those who rioted. Apparently OPH, the Czech legal observers, have video footage of some of the undercover cops throwing stones at police lines (!). Many eyewitnesses, including the legal observers, reported seeing undercover cops engage in violence and property destruction and then disappear safely behind police lines. The masked-up stone-thrower next to you in the crowd could have been a cop.<sup>28</sup>

By the time the conference was called to a halt a day early on the 27th, the police had arrested 859 people, 600 had been injured and more than 100 protesters had been deported.<sup>29</sup> 142 activists and 123 police officers needed medical attention. 13 activists were taken to hospital with broken legs and ribs, with wounds on their head or in a similarly serious condition.<sup>30</sup> Reportedly, a Russian and a Japanese delegate were also injured.<sup>31</sup>

Many of the people who had been arrested and were being held in jail were denied food, water and sleep. Legal observers and solicitors were denied access to jails and the Czech Ministry of the Interior broke off relations with OPH, the Czech-based legal monitoring group. Access to injured people (including some with severe head injuries) was frustrated by the police. Protesters were beaten, tear gassed, tied up for hours on end and sexually harassed while in prison. Some were kept isolated in the dark for days, handcuffed so they bled, sexually and racially insulted, strip-searched and made to perform 'exercises' for the amusement of the police.<sup>32</sup> There were reports of people having limbs broken and teeth knocked out. One woman got a broken spine. There is clear evidence of torture by the police.<sup>33</sup>

### September 27th and 28th

On the days following the main action on the 26th, activity was mainly focussed on prisoner support, although some activists also did actions on the delegates' hotels—infiltrating them and setting off the fire alarms late at night. The police

"This was as much a real anti-capitalism, anti-US thing as anything else, and in that sense maybe the US kids got fooled," said a US State Department official familiar with the situation. "These people play hardball."<sup>23</sup>



really cracked down after the 26th, and the balance of forces shifted quite a lot. Lots of protesters left on the 26th or the 27th and so the numbers of protesters fell as the numbers of police rose. The convergence centre (a huge abandoned warehouse that had been rented by INPEG) was closed down by the police on the 27th.<sup>34</sup> The official meeting point for the next day was Namesti Miru again. However this time there weren't so many people and those that did turn up were quickly surrounded by cops and took several hours to negotiate their way out.<sup>35</sup> The cops were randomly stopping and arresting people on the streets and carting them off to jail. Some people were held for weeks. The people in jail were allowed no way of communicating with the outside and no one on the outside had any way of finding out who was in jail or what jail they were in. The police would not give out any information about how many people they had arrested, who they were, where they were being held or anything. The result was that lots of people just 'disappeared', presumed arrested. It was a pretty scary situation, people were almost frightened to go outside.

On the 27th and 28th there were actions in support of the prisoners. On the Wednesday protesters gathered in the Old Town Square for a party to keep their spirits up in defiance of a police ban on any further protests.<sup>36</sup> This was a smart move as it was bang in the middle of the tourist area and the cops had their hands tied a bit by the necessity to keep up appearances. In the evening, 1,000 demonstrators gathered outside one jail where people were being held. Police surrounded the crowd, picking out the medics, then removing all the press. Protesters were told to leave one by one giving their passport details. Attempts to break police lines led to the police using gas and baton charges on the crowd and arresting more people.<sup>37</sup>



A cartoon by Dave Coverly. A man in a striped shirt and cap sits in a chair, holding a diamond-shaped sign that reads "CAPITALISM NO WAY" with a star above it. A speech bubble above him says "HERE WE GO....". To his right is a television set on a stand, showing a news anchor. A speech bubble from the TV says "AND NOW THE NEWS...". On the floor next to the chair are several cans of soda.

WILSHIRE! GO TO THE WORLD SUMMIT! WE HAVE ONE MORE MINUTE TO SPARE!

C'MON!

THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF HELD A GLOBAL SUMMIT IN PEACHTON TODAY...

THOUSANDS OF ANTI-CAPITALIST PROTESTERS WENT ON THE MARCH ATTEMPTING TO SWARM THE CONFERENCE VENUE AND ATTACKING BUILDINGS.

MUCH LATER

HMPH!

- LATER RIOT POLICE MOVED IN TO CLEAR THE AREA AND RESTORE ORDER. NOW SPORT...

LAWYER SAYS I HAVE TO PAY \$100,000 TO GET MY CAR BACK

MUCH LATER

AND NOW OUR  
OPEN UNIVERSITY SOCIOLOGY  
PROGRAM:  
THE CHANGING  
FACE OF PROTEST  
IN THE 21ST  
CENTURY.

in the Prague demos." They also say that "all the various groups involved in the mobilisation got some 28% of the entire population to support the S26 protests and bring about 2,000 young Czech workers, unemployed and students to the demos in Prague".<sup>42</sup> This all sounds pretty impressive, but is not really confirmed by most people's experience of the Prague actions.

The Leninist presence on the demonstrations definitely had a negative impact on public perception of the protests. As a Ukrainian activist reports: "When the signs and insignia of the old Communist enemy made their appearance on the streets, carried by a variety of leftists from 40 different countries, it was already clear as common sense that the ordinary Czech person would take the side of repression against the protesters."<sup>43</sup>

It also seems that we have had a negative effect on people's attitude towards the police. In a country where the police are effectively a law unto themselves and many can still remember the old 'Communist' police state, it seems we have been responsible for the biggest PR boost the Czech police have had in a long time. Ladislav Bríza, the director of the state riot police said: "For the first time people are thankful for the police, instead of spitting at them".<sup>44</sup>

Reports of the attitudes of the inhabitants of Prague (and indeed of the rest of the Czech Republic) were mixed. There were instances of the Czech people assisting protesters—an old man handing out cobblestones, water being poured from apartments on to riot police and friendly shopkeepers serving masked-up customers.<sup>40</sup> September 26th involved the largest and most brutal police presence on streets of Prague since the weeks leading up to the Velvet Revolution. The Czech people seemed to be fairly used to the idea of police brutality and were mostly none too fond of the police. There were reported to be lots of Czechs involved in the property destruction around Wenceslas Square in the evening—centred around the same avenues that were the focus for the 1989 Velvet Revolution.<sup>41</sup>

After S26, Czech revolutionary anarchists find themselves in a very difficult position. The State and capitalist media are doing their best to stir up mass hysteria aimed against anarchism. However, Czech anarchists ORA-Solidarita report that the reaction of working class people when they set up their info tables hasn't been so bad and write: "Nevertheless, a certain percentage of those 28%



of Czech people we had been able to get to support S26 prior to the demos can see beyond all the police and media mystifications and to some extent still support us and the protests. In relation to the police attack on Wenceslas Square on S26 in the evening, when the police were firing tear gas grenades against people gathered in front of the National Museum building, relatively many older working class people from Prague have recalled the memories of 1968, when Soviet tanks were firing against the National Museum."<sup>45</sup>

The police, however, are definitely using the protests as an excuse to crack down on radicals. Since S26, now all the international activists have gone home, there has been a large police operation against members of the Czech anarcho-syndicalist group, the Federation of Social Anarchists (The Czech section of the International Worker's Association). On Monday 23rd October, in three separate towns, special units of the political police surrounded and arrested three of the main dedicated members of the FSA-IWA. The fact they were picked up by commandos, in a perfectly coordinated and planned operation, has also to be linked with the violent press campaign against anarchists in the Czech Republic after S26. Even though the Czech section of IWA has not been named, it is clearly the real target of these attacks. The day before the arrests, computers belonging to the organisation were totally destroyed by a hacker attack. Police from the 'anti-extremist' department interrogated the anarchists, trying to link them with organising illegal demonstrations. The three people arrested were finally released after 48 hours of questioning by the police. One has since been charged with 'public rampage'.<sup>46</sup>

## Success?

Despite the low turnout, the demonstrations and actions in Prague seem to have been almost as successful as Seattle in terms of shutting down the conference. There weren't actually enough people to blockade all the entrances to the Conference Centre but what we lacked in numbers we made up for in violence. Luxurious banquets were cancelled and the conference itself closed down early after its second day, which was itself only attended by few financiers.<sup>47</sup> We had first hand reports from sympathetic people inside the Conference Centre that they were unable to leave and large amounts of the social programme for delegates was cancelled. Many delegates were too scared to leave their hotel rooms.

Despite media reports attempting to cover up how successfully the protests disrupted the World Bank/IMF conference, a senior World Bank staff member's report from inside the conference confirms the effect we had: "I saw ex-World Bank

"The protesters are right of course. We are just interested in the money. The World Bank and IMF are just helping people like us to cream it in. Isn't it great?"—American Deutsche Bank employee from New York.<sup>50</sup>

presidents walking around not knowing what to do. I asked one former president how he was doing... He didn't know what was happening. When I told him about the protests, he became totally disorientated."<sup>48</sup>

He continues: "As you know the meeting got cut by a day. During the press conference the next day, they denied that the protests were the reason. They actually said the reason was that things had run so efficiently that they were able to compress everything into two days. The press laughed at this... the whole conference was dominated by questions about the protest... the agenda had been taken over by the protesters." Our mole inside the conference also offers a tip for the future: "What is most significant about these meetings are the informal business parties. There were at least 15 lavish parties given by the commercial banks for the delegates. Very, very lavish. For many delegates, those were the prime events of the conference. The actual official functions were just pro forma. If I were a protester, by the way, I would have gone to these venues because they were not secured at all. These were the events that everyone went to in the evenings. These were very open venues. And they were listed in the schedule. Now, that would really have stopped the real business of the conference."<sup>49</sup>★

## Reflections on Prague

Another *Reflections* pamphlet collecting together diverse views on what happened in Prague and on the state of the 'new anti-capitalist movement' is due out in early 2001. For details email: [prague\\_autumn@hotmail.com](mailto:prague_autumn@hotmail.com)

## Financial Crimes

This spoof newspaper was produced by people in Reclaim the Streets to coincide with the Prague protests. Contents include: international news of resistance, understanding the IMF and World Bank', history of Reclaim the Streets etc. For a copy, try asking nicely and sending some money to: Reclaim the Streets, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY, UK.



## Notes

- 1) *Prague Post*, September 27-October 3, p.81
- 2) *Action South West Prague Extra*.
- 3) 'What is Growing on the Grave of Socialism?' by Olga Samborska, October 24, 2000. See: [www.infos.ca/](http://www.infos.ca/)
- 4) Quoted by the *Prague Post*, August 2, 2000.
- 5) Quoted in *Hospodarske Noviny*, August 1, 2000.
- 6) *Prague Post*, October 4-10, 2000, p.82
- 7) *The Central and Eastern European Review*, quoted in 'FBI to Monitor European Activists' by Ezekial Ford, August 8, 2000. See: [www.athenai.org/story.html?StoryID=9595](http://www.athenai.org/story.html?StoryID=9595) and in *September 26 Collective Bulletin*, No. 2, June 2000, p.3
- 8) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.8; *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A4; *Earth First! Action Update*, No. 71, October 2000, p.4
- 9) *SchNEWS*, No. 277, Friday 6th October, 2000.
- 10) *September 26 Collective Bulletin*, No. 3, July 2000, p.2
- 11) *Op. Cit.* 10, p.3
- 12) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.8
- 13) 'Call to Global Action' by Some people in Prague, October 10, 2000. Email: [stop.repression@gmx.net](mailto:stop.repression@gmx.net)
- 14) 'A Personal View on S26 Prague' by 'M', October 8, 2000. See: [www.i12.org/ps/oragrio.htm](http://www.i12.org/ps/oragrio.htm); *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.10; *Counter Information*, No. 55, Winter 2000/2001, p.1
- 15) *Op. Cit.* 9.
- 16) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.10
- 17) *Op. Cit.* 2; 'Rioting all the way to the Bank', *Loaded*, November [?] 2000, p.101
- 18) *Op. Cit.* 2; *Op. Cit.* 1, p.A4
- 19) 'S26 Global Action Report' by HMVPPM, MSC-Box 111, 8490 W. Colfax, Denver, CO 80215 4090, USA. Email: [bccr@rdnetonline.com](mailto:bccr@rdnetonline.com) The pamphlet version (with pictures) is available for a 33 cent stamp to this address; *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 20) 'A Personal View on S26 Prague' by 'M', October 8, 2000. See: [www.i12.org/ps/pragrio.htm](http://www.i12.org/ps/pragrio.htm); *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 21) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 22) Information taken September 28, 2000 from: <http://prague.indymedia.org/>; *Op. Cit.* 19.
- 23) *Op. Cit.* 1, p.812
- 24) 'A Personal View on S26 Prague' by 'M', October 8, 2000. See: [www.i12.org/ps/pragrio.htm](http://www.i12.org/ps/pragrio.htm)
- 25) *Op. Cit.* 19.
- 26) *Op. Cit.* 22.
- 27) *Op. Cit.* 19; *Op. Cit.* 22; *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, pp.8-9; *Op. Cit.* 9; *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A4
- 28) *Resistance*, No. 19, November 2000, p.3; *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A6
- 29) *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A1
- 30) *Op. Cit.* 3.
- 31) *Earth First! Action Update*, No. 71, October 2000, p.4
- 32) *Counter Information*, No. 55, Winter 2000/2001, pp.1-4
- 33) *Op. Cit.* 22.
- 34) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.10
- 35) *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A2
- 36) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.10
- 37) *Op. Cit.* 22.
- 38) *Op. Cit.* 22.
- 39) *Op. Cit.* 19.
- 40) *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No. 157, October/November 2000, p.8
- 41) *Op. Cit.* 22; *Op. Cit.* 9.
- 42) 'Globalisation of the Anarchist Resistance: Prague S26 and the Anti-Capitalist Movement' by Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists—Solidarity, October 24, 2000 [Article to be published, in French, in the French monthly *Alternative Libertaire*]. See: [www.infos.ca/](http://www.infos.ca/)
- 43) *Op. Cit.* 3.
- 44) *Op. Cit.* 6, p.A4
- 45) *Op. Cit.* 42; *Op. Cit.* 28.
- 46) 'The Czech Police is Looking for its Revenge', October 26, 2000 (from information given to the IWA secretary by the Czech section of the IWA). See: [www.infos.ca/](http://www.infos.ca/); *Resistance*, No. 20, December 2000, p.3

- 47) *Op. Cit.* 42.
- 48) 'A World Bank Staffer's Odyssey in Kafka's Prague' from *Focus on Trade* No. 55, October 2000 See: [www.focusweb.org/focus/pd/anec/lot/lot155.html](http://www.focusweb.org/focus/pd/anec/lot/lot155.html)
- 49) *Op. Cit.* 48.
- 50) *Op. Cit.* 9.
- 51) *Resistance*, No. 20, December 2000, p.3

## Contacts

**ORA-Solidarita, PO Box 12, 751 52 Prerov 1, Czech Republic.**  
Email: [mixam@volny.cz](mailto:mixam@volny.cz)

**FSA-IWA, PO Box 5, 15006 Praha, Czech Republic.**

Tel: +420 602 224747

Email: [fsa-praha@usa.net](mailto:fsa-praha@usa.net) and [intersec@atlas.cz](mailto:intersec@atlas.cz)

**Zeme Predevsim!**

**PO Box 237**

**16041 Prague 6**

**Czech Republic.**

Email: [zemepredevsim@ecn.cz](mailto:zemepredevsim@ecn.cz)

Web: [www.ecn.cz/zemepredevsim](http://www.ecn.cz/zemepredevsim)

## Prague Prisoners

Only one Polish man has been sentenced and imprisoned for the Prague protests and there is only one other—a Danish man accused of police assault—still known to be in jail. He is Mads and would like to receive letters to: **Madsthordal Trcrup, Pankrac Prison, Vazební Veznice, Taborska 988, 14000 Praha, Czech Republic.**<sup>51</sup> However, there are others who have been arrested and charged and who still need support.

Donations for legal defence (cheques/POs) can be made out to 'Prague Prisoner Support Fund' and sent c/o RTS, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY, UK.

For more information on prisoners and trials or to contribute to the defence fund direct contact ORA-Solidarita.



Your humble editors.



# Dancing into Danger

**Most UK activists arrived in Prague in the last few days leading up to S26. Several people had brought huge drums into the country with the intention of providing a mobile up-for-it samba band for the big day, and another group calling themselves 'Tactical Frivolity' had brought materials to make pink and silver dancing costumes. Others smuggled in radios, phones, flags, gas masks and other tools of the trade. We turned out to be one of the most well equipped groups.**

After several discussions it was decided that we didn't want to go with the INPEG plan and slot into the three designated routes to the Conference Centre (Blue—dangerously enclosed with no escape route; Yellow—already taken care of by Ya Basta!; Red—full of Trots), but wanted to form our own route... the Pink and Silver route. We spent the remaining few hours practising samba breaks and desperately trying hard to set up an intricate, non-hierarchical, consultative communications structure, involving cycle-scouts, signal flags, affinity group reps and spokescouncils.

On the morning of S26, we met up in a park not far from the square and then processed in formation (banner and black bloc in front, dancers and samba band behind with affinity groups and medics surrounding them) to the square, expecting not to be able to get in if the expected 20,000 people had turned up. However the square only had about 8,000 people in it, but still looked amazing. The pink and silver band and dancers did look and sound great, but the samba was drowned out by the Ya Basta! soundsystem, and we didn't attract the numbers we hoped for, leaving us with only about 400 UK activists and a smattering of other nationalities.

We left with no police escort and made our way to the south of the Conference Centre, winding down tiny Prague streets, managing to get amazingly close to our target. However, when we reached a major road leading to the Conference Centre, we could see an impressive array of riot cops, water cannons and police vehicles. We had a bit of a stand-off where we sat down and ate our sandwiches at them and then with tip-offs from our invaluable cycle scouts we got moving and nipped down some side streets (surrounding and trashing some delegates' cars on the way). We couldn't



believe our luck when the next police line we came across was a thin line of shirt-sleeved non-riot cops, with a few barriers in front of them. We moved quickly to get through them before they brought in the riot cops. They proved incredibly up for it though, and responded to our push with batons flying.

Sticks ripped from SWP placards proved useful for defending ourselves but it was not good enough. There weren't enough up-for-it people at the front to get through the police line, and as they fired a load of noise bombs at us, everyone panicked and ran for it. The next 30 minutes were spent ripping up cobblestones and throwing them at the cops. Some people attempted to barricade against police lines and this drew out the riot cops, who charged, scattering the crowd. A water cannon was used but it looked a bit impotent as the pressure wasn't up, and it was withdrawn quickly before we could damage it.

In the end we moved around a bit as we were unsure of where the delegates were coming out from, and we ended up at a huge posh hotel right next-door to the Conference Centre. Incredibly we managed to climb on to some of the balconies and some of the windows got smashed before everyone left, worried about the lack of an escape route. Up above, delegates watched, allegedly (so insiders tell us) shitting themselves. Down below people were trashing and bouncing cars into the road in front of riot cops and the dancers danced up to the cop lines. The riot cops' charges succeeded in splitting the crowd, but there was a great moment when one person was de-arrested after being snatched by undercover cops.

Later everyone left to go into town for the opera which the delegates were attending...★



# Block Rocking Beats

Arriving at the meeting point for the various different routes, we wandered around for a while trying to find the blue route/black block people. We eventually found the dodgy looking men and women in black lurking around a patch of trees that provided a bit of cover from the constant helicopter surveillance.

As the different coloured routes formed up and prepared to move off, some people started to dig up the cobblestones and pass them around. Others had discovered that the Socialist Workers' Party placards were attached to good solid sticks instead of the usual flimsy crap and started to strip the paper off them so they could be used to fight the cops.

The black block was made up of several hundred anarchists and autonomists from a huge range of countries—Czech, German, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Polish, American, British and probably many more. After waiting for what seemed like a very long time to move off we shuffled away from the square and made slow progress towards the Conference Centre. The march stopped and started, whilst we listened to slogans and songs in assorted languages, most of which sound just as dull as the English ones, although top marks to the American Infernal Noise Brigade drummers and to the Spanish CNT for singing proper songs with tunes and everything.

Eventually we reached the approach road to the Conference Centre. This street proceeded uphill along a small valley, with apartment buildings on one side, a park edged by cliffs on the other and rows of riot cops backed with armoured personnel carriers and water cannons at the end.

There was no doubt about what was going to happen next, none of the gradual build up of hostilities with the cops that usually happens in Britain. People just attacked them with everything they had as soon as they were in range. First came the cobblestones, then the first of the Molotov cocktails sailed over and exploded to a cheer from the crowd. After that the attack was relentless—most of the pavement and sections of wall were dug up for ammo as the fighting spread into the park. The cops responded with volleys of concussion grenades at first, then started using tear gas when that had failed to disperse the crowd. None of their initial tactics worked very well—the concussion grenades were easy to get



used to after the first few had gone off, the tear gas seemed quite weak (lots of people without gas masks were able to stand around in it) and even the water cannons seemed underpowered (they just made you wet without knocking you over).

The cops were forced back a little way, then brought the armoured vehicles to the front and made their line behind them. After this there was just no way to make further progress. The small entrance we were trying to take had cliffs on both sides and tanks in the middle—there was no way to get through, but they couldn't come out to disperse us either. This stalemate continued for an hour or so, with stones, bins and the occasional Molotov flying over to batter the police lines or bounce harmlessly off the armoured vehicles in front. Despite being probably the most full on thing I've been on, it also felt quite safe knowing that you could rely on everyone around you to pile in and try to de-arrest you if you got nabbed. Also, because of the constant attack the cops didn't even try to snatch people—I don't think anyone at all was arrested on this route.

Eventually the cops built up enough reinforcements to try and come out again. As they advanced, more of them and another water cannon joined from a side street and the crowd was slowly pushed back down the hill, fighting all the way. Reaching a junction a barricade was thrown together and burnt to slow down the police advance and allow people to regroup (this was typical of the way groups constantly saw what needed to be done and just did it, without lengthy discussions). Seeing that the cops finally had the advantage in this area people began to disperse in smaller groups, some trying to rejoin the attack at another point and others retiring to the pub. Many others headed for the city centre where the fighting continued through the night. ★



# Ya Basta(rds)!



On the 26th, the yellow march was led by an Italian group called Ya Basta!, who have made quite a name for themselves by dressing up in white overalls with lots of padding and protective armour and taking on lines of riot cops in this bizarre 'Michellin Man' get-up.

About five hundred Ya Basta! people were in front, followed by another two thousand or so activists from various different groups such as the PKK, Basque separatists, Spanish anarchists, unionists and international socialists.

Ya Basta! might have looked impressive in their white overalls and pads, but not so much to the people who were told off and attacked because they were carrying sticks and were prepared to fight the police on their own terms and not those of the Ya Basta! bureaucracy. Moreover, on the way to Namesti Miru they constantly told off people for not walking in line, and then attacked others who decided to smash a McDonalds with the excuse that it was spoiling their media image. It was becoming clear that Ya Basta! is a hierarchical organisation with visible 'leaders' and spokespeople.

Ya Basta! originates from the social centres of Italy. They were first formed during the collapse of the Eastern bloc when a large section of the Italian *autonomia* movement started reconsidering their ideas on class struggle and communism etc. Although the crude Marxist-Leninist approach to class and capital has been abandoned, it seems certain organisational characteristics still remain.

## A Bridge Too Far

The march was flowing forward to the tune of whistles, drums and shakers when it all stopped because Ya Basta! had decided to hold an impromptu press conference in front of the police blockade on the bridge. Frustration was creeping into the activists who were prevented from getting to the front by the 'Ya Basta(rds)!' crowd control.

You could hear the police ordering the crowd to disperse, smell the tear gas, see the smoke and even feel the droplets from the water cannon without being able to confront the police and bring about a meaningful outcome to a mass gathering of people who had travelled here to shut down the IMF. And all because some people had decided for you that this was to be a non-violent protest.

Eventually when I got to the block of Ya Basta! activists they were spectacularly dressed in gas masks, helmets and white water proof macs stuffed with bedding to provide padding. The action at this stage waxed and waned with scuffles breaking out between single activists and police. Brief charges at the police with their own barriers were the most effective tactic 'allowed' but it was never going to move the police tanks. During the actual confrontations with the police, non-Ya Basta! people were not allowed to come near the fight or to throw rocks from the back. The police finally did retreat all of five metres but did not seem particularly interested in arresting anyone. For more than 2 hours the 'White Overalls' were pushing up against police lines, but the bridge was thoroughly blocked by the armoured police vehicles and it proved to be too difficult to break through to the Conference Centre. They eventually left the bridge and joined up with the other marches on the way to the Opera House.

So it really did seem like a waste of resources (two or three thousand people) by Ya Basta! to try to 'boss' the march into a contradictory attempt to get across the bridge that they were never going to win. In the end the march was neither peaceful nor violent but rather a liberal 'Non Violent'. ★



# Here Comes the Barmy Army!

## Pink and Silver on the Warpath



The mainly British pink and silver section of the march was kind of funny in a way. It felt like marching along the streets with the contents of your local nightclub crossed with It's a Knockout and an anarcho version of Dad's Army. At the heart of the column was a samba band and a load of dancers all decked out in pink and silver carnival costumes. This was followed by a few hundred strong rag-tag bunch of Earth First! and Reclaim the Streets people and our assorted friends and relations.

It was all headed up by a mini black bloc laden with bravado and carrying a reinforced pink and silver banner made of doubled-over tarp bolted onto wooden staves with handles with SAMBA! painted on it. Although you would have thought if we were carrying a banner through Prague we might at least have had something useful and relevant (and preferably in Czech) written on it.

Time and effort had been put into developing a complex communications and decision-making structure for the day. The idea was that in the centre of our marching column was a group of people with mobile phones and radios who were in contact with the two central communication hubs Centrum and Traveller (one fixed and one mobile)—and also with a number of scouts, predominantly on bikes, who could go ahead to check out where the cops were and what route we should take etc. The communications team in the centre of the march then liaised with a route group who knew the area and had all the maps in order to decide where

to go. This decision was then passed forward to the people at the front of the march and signalled to everyone by a big flag on a tall pole used to indicate what direction to go in. The whole march was made of affinity groups, each of which had a delegate. When a decision had to be made which the communications team and route group didn't feel they could make by themselves, then the direction-indicating flag went down and a flag with a picture of a rather confused looking fish went up. The delegates from each of these affinity groups then had to gather around this flag to find out whatever decision needed to be made and then shuttle back and forth between their affinity group and the Impromptu spokescouncil to sort it out.

The scouts were excellent and really useful, but at the end of the day was the rest of it necessary or desirable? Using this unwieldy process we just about managed to walk down the road in the same direction together (although sometimes it was touch and go when we hit a corner) and to be



subject to this command structure on the day was one of the most disempowering and frustrating experiences of my political life. To see the yellow Ya Bastal march streaming out of the square at a fast pace whilst we hung around waiting for fuck-knows-what made me want to leave and join the blue anarcho/autonomist march there and then. To a greater or lesser extent this continued for the rest of the day and I feel it quashed a vital element of spontaneity and passion that usually counts for so much in these situations.

This attempt we made at a mass decision making process was far less egalitarian than simply letting a crowd do what a crowd does. In situations like large demos, crowds operate with a sort of organic free-flowing decision-making ability. Everyone judges for themselves individually or with mates what it's best to do and if people aren't confident about something, they hang back, and if they don't like it they leave. But people also want to stick together in large numbers and so an effective group opinion does emerge. Crowds don't always do the best thing but it usually works at least as quickly and as well as any attempts to formally structure it—and without relying on the same old faces with the mobile phones and loud voices.

Maybe we needed a route to the Conference Centre to be decided and led by a few people, but if we had spent less time on the elaborate decision making structure we could have spent more time preparing in other perhaps more useful ways. And anyway, the whole elaborate edifice all went to shit as soon as we actually met any kind of resistance. Running an army by consensus is a stupid idea—let's not do it again.

## Glib Slogans R Us

One influential idea that has been recently re-invented by the British eco-activist scene and successfully exported around the world is the idea that protest and revolution is like a carnival. Reclaim the Streets and others have very successfully pushed this idea of 'party and protest', largely in the form of the 'RTS' street party.

This is a great idea, and when it works well it has led to some amazing things. But there have been continuous problems about how it works out in practice. If the idea is to be anything more than a glib slogan (Revolution = Carnival and Carnival = Revolution) which can be trotted out at every opportunity, then we need to think through how exactly it will work. There are plenty of ways in which a revolution is a carnival and vice-versa, but there are also plenty of ways in which it ain't, and to absolutely equate one with the other can lead to all sorts of problems. So often this synthesis of party and protest results in a conflict and it

becomes a choice between party or protest, which seems to have been the case in Prague.

## Fairies and Fighters

Our little bloc neatly expressed some of these contradictions. We were not as good as we could have been at being a carnivalesque, drumming, dancing parade because the dancers and the drummers were surrounded by big banners blocking any view of them carried by a very uncarnivalesque scowling black bloc who looked like they were going to war with gas masks and sticks. The carnivalesque people in their costumes loved all the media, and were dancing around and parading themselves in front of the TV cameras, who, in turn, equally loved the spectacle. The black bloc people at the head of the march were, however, far more concerned with security and actively tried to avoid being filmed and photographed, using the reinforced banner to shield the march from photographers. The poor old press must have been very perplexed. What to make of a load of exhibitionists in huge pink carnival costumes marching through the centre of town to a samba band, then when you tried to get close to take any photos some blacked-up lunatic in a gas mask jumped up in front of you screaming "no photos!"?

Likewise we were not as effective a fighting column as we might have been because all the dancing people in their carnival costumes and the drum-laden samba band couldn't move fast enough for us to really skirt around the police and swiftly seize tactical opportunities when they presented themselves. They got in the way when we were charging the police lines, and if we actually had managed to break through, then the front of the march would probably have ended up trapped behind the cop lines as they closed again behind us because behind the black block was a space and then a whole load of drummers and dancers that stopped anyone else moving forwards to fill it.

Another fault showed itself in a more dangerous way: a lack of useful discussion and practical preparation. We never collectively discussed or thought about exactly what we were trying to do on





S26 in Prague. Were we trying to block the streets or to smash through police lines to get into the Conference Centre? And how exactly were we going to accomplish either of these? There was some sense in not spending too much time before the action thinking about these things as we had no idea what sort of policing strategy we would be up against, how many of us there would be or how far we would get. Lots of people were expecting that the police might try to block us into our meeting point at the square, or even blockade it to prevent us getting there, so we might have to try and get through police lines to even get into or out of our initial meeting point. However, as it turned out on the day, almost all the police were concentrated around the Conference Centre with hardly any anywhere else. There were almost no police following us on our march through town to the Conference Centre which we reached relatively swiftly and with no problems. So the question of what exactly we were going to do when we got there came to be much more important than had been expected.

## Victory through Violence?

Although there was some logic in avoiding these questions prior to the day, some of the reason behind the non-discussion of these issues seemed to be one of avoiding awkward and potentially divisive questions which could cause rifts and arguments. Not always a bad thing, except when, as in this case, they are vital questions which might make a large difference to people's life and liberty.

Basically, if we as a group were going to do anything more than sit in the road as a blockade, and actually try and get in the Conference Centre for example, then (short of some fantastically clever plan that nobody had) we were going to need to use some sort of violence to do it. And for this to be as effective as possible, and for us to avoid as much risk to ourselves as possible, it needed to some extent to be pre-planned and co-ordinated. However, to attempt to raise this before the 26th in the planning of the action would have been incredibly divisive, as large numbers of the people on our pink and silver block (not to mention INPEG) would have very strongly disapproved.

It's one thing to defend, or at least not condemn, spontaneous violence in self-defence, or to get everyone to agree that property damage is okay, but quite another to sit down and pre-plan a violent attack on the police. Yet this is what we would have needed to do. Because we didn't raise and resolve these awkward issues, we went off and attacked the police lines in an unplanned, unorganised and half-cocked way, the end result of which was that it wasn't as effective as it could have been and people got hurt. The initial pink and

silver charge and attack on the police lines filled a tactical gap that was left empty by the lack of discussion as to what to do when we eventually encountered the inevitable police lines. If we *had* discussed it, the conclusion we should have reached was that if we were going to get anywhere then we would have needed more extreme and targeted violence or none at all, not some half-way house with all the disadvantages of both but none of the advantages.

There are generally a few types of violence we come across in our political activity. The most common is self defence and spontaneous outbursts of anger. Unplanned and uncoordinated they're usually provoked by an attack or an expression of extreme emotions. Another is ritualistic violence, the political equivalent of the post-pub fight—unplanned, unthought out and generally conducted by frustrated and/or drunk people. One we haven't yet engaged with much (thank fuck) is the pre-planned and strategically thought out use of targeted violence.

Like it or not, a large part of the effectiveness of our mass street mobilisations rests on this threat of implied violence from us. Obviously the police reaction is to organise to prevent it occurring. As part of their plans to try and contain the mob, they often give us some sort of sacrificial target to keep us happy and diffuse the development of our collective strength into something they can't control.

In Prague the space they did let us have for blockading felt meaningless as the delegates were already inside the Conference Centre. This left us with very little to do apart from smash things up or attack the cops and try and force our way into the Conference Centre.

Unfortunately we failed to realise that this was likely to be the case and to discuss what we wanted to do about it. Maybe drummers, pink dancers and fighting the cops could have worked together but we never talked about how. Instead we had an unthought out part-carnival part-black block where nobody was happy and we weren't as effective as we could have been. Luckily we didn't come off too badly.★



*Brighton pirate posse in the area!*



# Time to Take The Gloves Off

## Fuck the Civil, Let's get Disobedient!



To the vast majority of those that were there, the actions against the IMF and World Bank in Prague in September 2000 were a resounding success. Not only was the scythe of global privatisation, dollarisation and misappropriation temporarily wrested from the hands of the blood-letters meeting in the Prague Conference Centre, S26 saw an international, disparate but united, revolutionary bloc acting as an organised unit on the streets of the Bohemian capital. So why were the loudest shouters in the activist community (in the loosest sense of the word 'community') hell-bent on convincing the world that the day's actions were a failure?

"We are in this movement to fight for innocent citizens who suffer the horrible consequences of unrestricted capitalist plundering," wrote *Kontrast*, the newspaper of the Prague Independent Media Centre (IMC), mouthpiece of INPEG (the Czech-based group who initiated the day of action) and self-appointed voice of the assembled masses. Fair enough, you may think. Then they add: "If you threw a rock, firebomb, apple, bottle or anything else at a cop during yesterday's protest... you have betrayed INPEG's commitment to non-violence, the movement and yourselves." With almost zero appreciation of recent events (in

Prague, Yugoslavia, Columbia, Guatemala, Chad, West Papua, the Philippines, etc.) or their repercussions, INPEG's Central Committee put out a statement on September 27th saying they were "very upset" by the violence, which was "distracting attention away from the violence of economic globalisation we are working to stop". Activists within the Conference Centre had already explained, by this point, how both meetings and delegates "systematically fell apart" due to the echo of concussion grenades, the odour of tear gas, and reports that their ring-of-steel was on the verge of collapse.



## Politically Immature Hate Criminals

As well as "betrayers", according to *Kontrast*, anyone who dared physically confront the heavily armed and armoured foot-soldiers of capitalism (the riot police) with a view to actually breaching the cordon and shutting down the meetings, were "politically-immature hate criminals". We should "think of the cops as if they were foreigners," wrote the IMC's paper. "If you throw a rock at a foreigner, you are committing a hate crime. If you throw a rock at a cop, that's a hate crime too." Let's be candid. Riot police are riot police, whatever their national allegiance. And in these circumstances, they are hired bodyguards to capitalism's elite. They are a physical obstacle between us and those we seek to stop, they will not step aside in the face of flowers or chants of 'the whole world is watching', but they will beat and break those who try to overstep the boundaries of permitted dissent. The police will allow you to make a noise, even sometimes to engage in 'civil' disobedience, but if you dare to become genuinely disobedient and threaten to actually change the course of events, then they will crush you. From the countless teenagers summarily executed for defying Shell in the Niger Delta, to the women of Ratnagiri who have been beaten and jailed without trial for opposing Enron's destruction of India's Maharashtra state, the police are the frontline of oppression. They are the Imperial shock troops, hired locally but acting, habitually, under US direction.

"What if we tried to bring cops into the movement?" asked *Kontrast*, "After all, by serving as oppressors they are also oppressed. These folks have been working for the wrong cause all along. It's time they got liberated." Many of the 900 people arrested on or around S26 came to Prague to help liberate the planet's oppressed too. Those that were beaten, abused and sexually assaulted by sadistic, violent, often fascist party card-holding cops, those that nursed wounds in Czech jail cells, being refused visits as they awaited the imminent litany of scapegoating charges, may not agree wholeheartedly with this sentiment.

## Doing the Bank's Work for Them

As far as the S26 actions went, one primary aim of the Bank, the Fund, the corporations, the authorities and their assembled press was to discredit anti-capitalism, to paint the actions as a failure, and the movement as divided and out-of-control. Despite this not being the case, INPEG, the IMC and the more liberal reformist groups involved in Prague seemed determined to drive this message home, saving the police, financiers and media the trouble. The idea that intensely dedicated and well-informed revolutionary groups



such as the Spanish CNT or those that came from Germany, Poland, Greece and Czech were guilty of "betrayal" because they failed to adhere to the rules of rebellion as laid down by INPEG shows the arrogance and naivety of an organisation top-heavy with middle class British and Americans. The morally superior anti-capitalist elite seems pathetically unaware of the bigger picture of a global revolutionary struggle and the fight against oppression and inequality that's going down on a thousand international frontlines. 'It's my ball, play the game my way or I'm going home', they howl, as if no one who came to Prague was aware of the bloodthirstiness and violence of the New World Order before INPEG put out their call to action.

## Against Authority? Here are the Rules...

In the run up to the action, as numbers in the convergence centre swelled to thousands, anyone who questioned the plans on the table was told. "I'm sorry but this is the consensus", in reference to decisions taken months previously by a group of a hundred or so activist group 'delegates'. This is regardless of the fact that a clique of authoritarian Trotskyite groups had gone along mob-handed to make sure their agenda became the 'consensus'. Despite claims of non-hierarchical decision making, those that came to Prague to take action were then expected to adhere to these commandments. Similarly, when the spokescouncil formed, each meeting was steered along the agenda of a small group of, more often than not, American and British people. "I'm sorry, but we have to move on", one US facilitator told about forty Southern Europeans who were waiting to speak (with hands up as instructed). All animals are equal eh?... but trust me, I'm Ruckus Society accredited....



## Flowers or Firebombs?

No one denies the right of individuals within, or without, INPEG, or even INPEG as an organisation, to carry out their desired form of non-violent protest and action. However the mutual respect held by most protesters does not seem to enter their concept of autonomous action. The vast majority of activists (fluffy pink fairies and spiky blue petrol-bombers alike) are happy for each individual to conduct their protest as they see fit. After all, are we not all striving for a common goal? The only precondition may be that if one group are at the gates doing a spot of cross-legged, tantric de-monetarising, it's not helpful for another to come and start bricking the police at that barricade. Similarly, it's not particularly useful for people to start tying flowers to a fence that is about to be firebombed.

Out of the 10,000 who took to Prague's streets, there were probably less than a total of forty people (from both sides of the debate) who wanted to bicker about violence and non-violence. The rest of us were just getting on with the action. Unfortunately the non-violent types have taken the same definition of violence adopted by the PR wing of corporate capitalism—the media—so when they start huffing and puffing, the assembled hacks think it's Christmas (and focus their reports on this 'division'). It was no mistake that the BBC's concluding thought in their film on Prague was from a girl who thought "violence had spoiled it" because that's all her mother saw on TV. It was unfortunate that she failed to make the connection between the media's chosen reporting slant and her mother's preconceptions, or for that matter her own.

Though we expect the BBC to view the 'general public' as white, middle class, reactionary, high-earning, middle England property owners, it is unfortunate when some of us also follow this lead. The accepted view (wheeled out again by INPEG in Prague on September 27) is that property damage and violence damages sympathy for the causes we are trying to address. With a total lack of irony, the non-violence lobby mirrors the system they claim to oppose: the conclusions drawn (from media reports) by affluent, overwhelmingly white, Western minorities are more valuable than those drawn by the (not-so-white) less economically influential majority from politically impotent (globally speaking) countries. Put yourself in the (swoosh-free) shoes of a twelve year old girl, working on her feet without a break 18 hours a day, seven days a week, stitching Nike trainers in some shit-hole factory in Jakarta. Do you think she is 'outraged' or 'offended' when kids in the West recognise her predicament and take a claw hammer to the glass palaces that retail these fucking things for the equivalent of her annual salary. Do you think she is

'appalled' when young men and women on the other side of the planet are prepared to physically confront lines of thug-policemen in a bid to stop the institutions who masterminded the powerless, landless, economo-prison she has no obvious escape from? Yes? No? Which? Maybe if we stopped treating those at the sharp end of global capitalism like victims, but as equals—as people deserving of our fucking respect instead of our salvation (and remember this shit is going down in Kettering as well as Kinshasa)—then maybe the odd cobblestone, smashed window, bloody-nosed cop or jailed activist would be less of an ideological sticking point for people who claim to care.

## Mindless Destruction of Property

"The mindless destruction of property in Prague were fruitless expressions of powerlessness and political immaturity", scolded the wagging finger of *Kontrast*, in an equally arrogant echo of the tirade that hounded the window breakers in Seattle. Staring out of the wreckage of the Wenceslas Square McDonalds on the night of September 26 was the graffitied legend "Fight Imperialism". Is it not predictable that the American (I'm guessing) who described the ritual trashing of such symbols of cultural and economic homogenisation as "mindless" completely missed the symbolism of deconstructing such an icon of US imperialism. The smashing of McDonalds restaurants is not an act of *agent provocateur* policemen, but flag burning for the 21st Century. The venue may alter, but the message to the empire builders is the same: we don't want your aspirations or control, we don't want to feed your profits, or fill your hospitals. Cast your minds back to the Russian occupation during the Prague Spring of 1968, when people in the city removed all road signs except the ones pointing to Moscow—invaders have never been welcome. The writing is on the wall now, as it was then: Romans Go Home.







*"Leaders? Us?" Another riveting INPEG meeting reaches its thrilling climax.*

There is an affluent Western elite (not bloody more of them, surely?) who appear to have manoeuvred themselves to the top of the underground resistance movement. They thumb their noses at those who seek a more lasting and total release from oppression and authority, they peddle a line more liberal and reformist than many of the mainstream left wing groups and NGOs, and their obsession with single issues (whether it's the organisation of a big action, or the dedication to a, more often than not, environmental cause) seems to make them incapable of understanding the bigger picture. Those that do see it are criticised for 'detracting' from the message—exactly as INPEG responded to the anarchist bloc.

Referring to the realisation-gap between the (white) environmental movement and the lives of the (predominantly not white) people living in the shadow of globalisation, jailed New Afrikan anarchist, Ojore N. Lutalo pointed out, "Most people cannot afford the privilege of worrying about a tree, they have to spend their every waking hour dealing with ways to feed and clothe themselves, pay their rent, while contending with police brutality and the prospect of becoming victims of crime by other dispossessed people that need to pay their own bills." It is no coincidence that those who favour an oh-so-civilised revolution brought about through compromise and lobbying, and those who think confrontation is necessary to foster genuine change, are divided (on the whole) along class lines.

In the wake of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara slammed the bogus intentions of Western would-be revolutionaries for following this "peaceful parliamentary strategy". Just as we criticise the organised left for having designs on some post revolutionary throne, the 'fat cat-friendly' strategy adopted by many non-violent activists is designed, as Guevara put it, to "deliver the working classes, bound hand and foot, to the ruling class". Namely,

however it turns out, your elites stay in control. Surely if we seriously seek to turn the murdering stitch-up that is capitalism on its head then those who take the power back must be those who have had it stolen from them in the first place. Is it not a little dubious that significant chunks of the Western environmental movement will risk life and liberty for a birch copse, or starving babies on the other side of the planet, yet have zero tolerance for equally fucked-over working people in their own neighbourhoods? Think about it.

## **Jail Me Next Please!**

The spectre of Seattle seems to have clouded activist perceptions to the extent that no action is valid unless it follows a set US decree (we're mirroring the bloody globalisers again). Support for those who get arrested has become exclusively limited to 'jail solidarity' in the form of people queuing up for criminal records. The same individual who haggled with the police for the arrest of five hundred rain-soaked folk in Washington DC on April 16, was in Prague (megaphone in hand) convincing a new crop of well-intentioned youngsters to 'cross the line'. Thankfully your average European activist is a little more lateral thinking, and the aftermath of S26 has seen some highly effective non-submissive solidarity such as the trashing of France's Czech Travel Bureau by fifteen masked bat-wielders, the occupation of the Barcelona Czech Embassy and the hijacking of a bus transporting jailed activists to a detention centre.

## **Do we Tread Water or do we Swim?**

The point is not that INPEG's strategy was invalid. On the contrary, without INPEG the actions in Prague would not have happened. But there is a chasm-like difference between organisation and control. The 'consensus' reached by a fraction of those who actually came to the city on S26 to face off with the Bank and the authorities, somehow became a rulebook that we were all expected to slavishly follow (despite the dubious circumstances in which the bloody thing was originally drafted).

Similarly, the 'Seattle model' of organisation and decision making did not sit so easily with a significantly more diverse, militant and international group than those which have recently attacked capitalism in America. In the end, the most effective tactical links made in Prague happened well outside of the organisational structures. It is also difficult not to let the more confident and/or power-hungry folk involved in the movement take over what are intended as hierarchy-free meetings. Admittedly, often nothing gets done until someone gets up and does it. But again in Prague, discussions would often be steered in a direction that most of those present were either opposed to



or disinterested in. Facilitators seemed to somehow morph into chairpersons.

The same personality problems dogged the Independent Media Centre (IMC). Though, to be brutally honest, since its inception, the IMC has never been truly hierarchy-free. The 'players' within the IMC have always sought to emulate the media monoliths they are supposedly offering an alternative to. In Prague, Indymedia came of age. Is it not a sad state of affairs when we are getting more accurate information from Murdoch's *Financial Times* than from the IMC? When it stops being a vehicle for dissenting voices and instead becomes the accepted voice of dissent, Indymedia is redundant.

Again, following the arrests and subsequent brutalising of people in Prague's jails, large numbers of ostensibly clued-up activists were shocked and outraged. Though my sympathy and support is 100 per cent behind those who were locked up, are people genuinely surprised that the police and prisons are treating those who oppose the system like shit? Were they expecting those jailed to be given a cup of tea and a couple of snouts from some chirpy Ronnie Barker-like figure? What do they think the police, the courts and the prisons are for? To stop you getting raped and robbed? To get your cat out of a fucking tree? (Hmm—no, you're freezing cold on this one)... or to maintain power and control through fear and incarceration? (Bingo!). The sooner people accept that the tools of the state are neither impartial nor reformable, the closer we get to threatening real change.

Some will take offence at the criticisms voiced here. But this document only came about in response to some of the misplaced and misinformed nonsense that has been published and peddled in numerous public meetings in the wake of S26. British activists would do better to stop imitating the rest of the population, who sheepishly follow the example of America, and instead learn a little from our European counterparts. After all, unlike American 'anti-capitalists', European activists are not labouring (to the same extent at least) under the misconception that change will come through either the ballot box or the shopping basket. (This is a generalisation—there are some incredibly sussed and dedicated US activists, just as there are some totally counterproductive European activists.)

In the past weeks, riot police have again been wheeled out to protect capitalist top dogs at the Asia-Europe Meetings in Seoul and at the EU summit in Nice. Meanwhile the West minces words and truths in defence of the latest Israeli crackdown on Palestinian Arabs. Land distribution, harassment and the omnipotent US agenda fail to make the front pages where small children bleed

after being 'hit by plastic bullets' as if the fucking things fell from the sky. Meanwhile street protesters battling cops in Belgrade are heralded as heroes by the West's media, governments and anti-capitalists alike, as one of the few national leaders to have consistently refused IMF/US interference in his country is elbowed out. (Making no bones about his replacement being an equally insidious nationalist asshole with a similar line on Kosovo as his predecessor.)

Many have echoed *Kontrast's* line that street violence damages their "critique of IMF and World Bank policy", as if these institutions survive in a vacuum. Unfortunately, their dismantling will not create global equality, empowerment or environmental redemption (the Bank and Fund are already toying with reinvention and are deferring work to regional Development Banks). The system we are up against is ingrained in every bleep of every checkout, in every crack of every rifle, in every price hike or tax cut, in every full tank and every empty bowl, in every white paper and every red river. Governments and money back it, and it will do everything within its power to defend itself. Yes, the system is violent, the state is violent, the police, the armies, the industry, the agriculture, the distribution of land, the privatisation, the profit, the sham they call democracy and the garbage they call information—are all brutally fucking violent. Capitalism (under this or any other name) is not about to roll over because we can all stand out in the rain for an afternoon.

There are two things you can do as an activist. You can make the situation better, or you can make it worse. Those within 'anti-capitalism' (a catch-all tag that has surely become meaningless) who are determined to peddle the decadent, Western, middle class misconception that "the violence is detracting from our message" are, undoubtedly, making the situation worse.★

Peace sign, also  
used to poke some-  
body in the eyes.





# Communications in Prague

**Given that there were going to be thousands of people in large groups taking different routes at the same time to the same destination, co-ordination of information for the day was going to be vital. For this there was a well thought out and well enacted system of communications, both physical and electronic.**

Cycle couriers with mobile phones and/or two-way radios ran messages and ferried equipment, and there were several cycle medics too. Cycles are ideal for their speed and unfollowability. They go down alleys and cut through traffic, avoiding cops in vehicles and too fast for cops on foot.

For electronic co-ordination of information there were CB radios and a pirate radio FM broadcast (that never actually got working). The main co-ordination was done by a central place called Centrum. People were on the streets in affinity groups, and between a cluster of several affinity groups there would be someone with the role of communicating with Centrum. When any development took place or they needed information on what was happening elsewhere, they'd call Centrum. Because these calls flowed thick and fast, the people in Centrum could get a clear picture of what was happening at the various parts of the marches, and Centrum could call communicators with any information they needed. There was a mobile back-up version of Centrum in a vehicle, known as Traveller, which was ready to take over if Centrum was raided by police.

Centrum's location was mere detail, and so need not be disclosed—or even decided—until the last minute. Late at night on the 25th, a local person booked into a hotel room under a false name and paid for it in cash. Two of the team stayed the night, the rest arrived early in the morning of the 26th. During the two hours that the march was assembling, Centrum phoned all the communicators and gave them the numbers at Centrum. These were Czech mobile numbers, got by changing foreign mobiles using Czech SIM cards, so the phones were untraceable to anyone.

The whole thing was resting on faith that the mobile phone networks would be functioning. As we were in a capital city, we felt it unlikely that the authorities would jam all the networks. In the end, we were right. As back up, there were digital two-way radios with an urban range of around 1km, and longer range CBs. They were, however, very few and badly distributed, so it's fortunate that they weren't needed. All the communicators' numbers were on a computer that could send a text message simultaneously to every number.

Centrum contained eight people and the same number of phones. Four of these were numbers given out, three were retained for outgoing calls

(mostly to communicators, Traveller and the pirate FM crew) and one for medical communication. Because we'd be talking to people in very loud places (samba, riot or both), there was an effort to have people who could speak with communicators in their native language. In Centrum were native speakers of English, Czech and Spanish. German would've been good too, but nobody came forward to do it. The team also contained someone with legal knowledge and a trained nurse.

There was a large-scale map of the city, and coloured pins to denote the different coloured marches and the police. There were several of the team who had a good knowledge of the city's geography. This was crucial in order to be able to direct people to labyrinthine narrow streets for getaways, or else to know, for example, that what appears on the map as a road with open space at either side is in fact a bridge over a ravine.

Cycle couriers phoned in with details of police build-ups, people who were surplus to requirements at a barricade were given a police-free route around to join up with a group who were needing more people for a promising push at police lines, groups on either side of police blockades could co-ordinate their knowledge and efforts. Injured people taken to hospital by police could use Centrum to escape custody and get taken to a safe house for medical treatment.

Centrum's mission was always clear; it was not a command post of generals, it was simply an information collection and distribution point. Centrum could not see what was happening, and decisions about what to do on the ground rested entirely with the people on the ground.

By 9.00pm after a 13 hour shift, the information was not coming in to Centrum in sufficient quantity or detail, and the need for co-ordination of different groups had abated. The incriminating bits of paper were ripped up and flushed down the toilet, and the team left the hotel. No police saw them, and they were now un-nickable.

It occurred to those involved that not only was it a good idea to have a roving back-up in a vehicle, but there could also have been a back-up far away, in a different town—or even a different country. As long as they had mobile phones, a map of the city and a first-hand knowledge of it on the ground, and people who spoke the same languages as the communicators, they could have been anywhere.★



# Bashing the GE-nie Back in the Bottle

## Borders No Barrier to Sabotage

**The last year has seen a global expansion of resistance to genetic technology. Across the world shadows in the moonlight have razed GE crop trials to the ground. Spades, sticks, scythes, sickles and fire have brought in the harvest. Doors have splintered as labs are broken into. Pies have been aimed at the arrogance of the powerful. Harassment and disruption has greeted the biotech industry wherever it has gathered...**

Since the last issue of *Do or Die* was published in August 1999, there have been anti-biotech actions in America, Britain, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, India, Australia, Greece, Ecuador, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Bangladesh and the Philippines. (Undoubtedly there have been actions we haven't heard about in other countries. This especially applies to the Third/Majority World.) Many of these countries are new to trashing the GM-technocrats' tools. In other countries where resistance to genetic engineering is more established, tactics have evolved, groups consolidated and actions have become increasingly audacious.

Our success—especially in Britain—is remarkable, but we should not fall for the myth of imminent victory. At least in terms of genetic engineering, resistance is *not* as transnational as capital. Corporate and state bodies have been channelling more and more funds and time into GM crops. Actions are slowing this rate of acceleration but we're still losing the race.

This should not dissuade us from doing what needs to be done. To 'merely' delay massive social dislocation and biological pollution is worthy of the risks involved. As well as the 'finger in the dam' aspect of anti-GM campaigns, the resistance is serving other purposes. Groups all over the world are linking up, training and learning from each other. The hope for a free and ecological future lies in these embryonic movements which understand their enemies are the machine and its masters and their comrades the land and its lovers. The resistance against genetic engineering has catalysed the growth of revolutionary ecological groups around the world. The elite may have

designed a weapon which will rebound on themselves.

The aim of this article is to give an overview of actions over the last year in this global anti-technology war. It will not give a political, ecological or strategic background to genetic engineering. If you're new to this struggle it would be a good idea to read 'The New Luddite War' in the last issue of *Do or Die*, which also includes some recommended reading.

### Hurricane Sabotage Hits GM Harvest

Over the last year the country that has seen the most dramatic growth of anti-GM sabotage has been the US. The world's first outdoor genetic test crop was of strawberries at the University of California in 1987. The night after the crop had been transplanted, EFlers climbed fences, evaded security and succeeded in pulling up all 2,000 plants.<sup>1</sup> In 1989 American EFlers destroyed yet more test sites, but as the 80s slipped into the 90s the US sabotage stopped.

Twelve years after the first action, the decade-long lull came to a dramatic end. On the 27th of July 99, The University of California once again became the launch pad for a wave of action—this time much bigger than the first. That night a group calling itself 'The California Croppers' trashed 14 rows of GM corn. The following night saw an acre of GM corn elsewhere in California destroyed. A







*June 2000: The Anarchist Golfing Association destroys GE grass at Pure Seed Testing in Canby, Oregon causing \$500,000 worth of damage and causing 10-15 years of research to be lost.*

month later, resistance had spread to the East Coast where yet more experimental GM corn was destroyed, this time at the University of Maine. A week later Vermont, two days after that Minnesota. Two weeks later 50 rows of GM corn were destroyed at a Pioneer facility and the campaign moved up a notch with company vehicles damaged. Corn sites continued to be laid waste. GM melons, walnut trees and tomatoes got mashed.

After only two months of the campaign there had been twelve successful sabotages, proceeding to a point where in one action saboteurs could destroy 50 rows of transgenic corn, an acre of herbicide tolerant sunflowers, one hundred melons and trash irrigation equipment and greenhouses undetected.

The last year has seen more and more crop experiments destroyed, ranging from sugar beet to GM trees. While straight site trashings continue, actions have also escalated to levels which Europe has yet to reach. In the third month of the campaign, all the windows on one side of a GM company's offices were caved in.

Five months in and a communiqué announces that 3 hours before the beginning of the new 'biotech century' the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) had broken into the office of a Michigan University GM researcher, dousing it with gasoline and setting it on fire, causing \$400,000 of damage. The work destroyed was funded in part by the multinational Monsanto, which led the communiqué to claim the action as the first US burning in solidarity with the Indian KRRS (Karnataka State Farmers Association) 'Cremate Monsanto' campaign. State response was quick and a month after the attack Craig Rosebraugh, who had been acting as ELF Press Officer, was raided at 8.00am by 15 FBI agents with guns drawn. Simultaneously other agents raided the offices of the Portland Liberation

Collective. Though obviously triggered by the arson, these raids were linked to a Grand Jury investigation into the ELF.

As the year has gone on, daytime actions have grown like their nighttime counterparts. The road to Cargill's international HQ was barricaded in March causing two mile tailbacks. The blockade was initially carried out by the normal criminal band of EFlers and anarchists but they were later joined by a noisy carnival of supportive locals, scientists and farmers. After the cops dislodged the barricade the diverse bunch slowed the traffic around the HQ for hours. Outside the citadel of corporate agribusiness, voices joined together chanting: "Burn the Buildings, Pull the Crops, This Is Where the Research Stops!"

The same month saw 'Bio-Devastation 2000', a series of actions in Boston aimed at America's biggest gathering of GM scientists and business. 2,500 people took part in an anti-corporate, anti-GM carnival. Thirty gallons of GM soya beans were dumped blocking the conference centre's entrance. Activists infiltrated and caused chaos in meetings, disrupting speeches and flapping the faceless bureaucrats. One woman even managed to sneak on the special conference shuttle bus and harangue a captive audience of delegates. Outside the conference centre the police had panicked and prepared for a Seattle. Windows of high street shops, even a pizza emporium, were boarded up, whilst cops patrolled the streets.

Minneapolis was the host for the next confrontation when the International Society for Animal Genetics (ISAG) met at the end of July. "A police helicopter hovers above us. At least thirty people have been arrested. Three hours ago one hundred unmasked people broke a police line intended to box us into a street. Using plywood sign/shields and a plastic banner that repelled tear gas and pepper spray, the frontline rocked our world and we escaped from their trap, only to re-take the WHOLE STREET downtown, where later we were separated and one group was surrounded. Last night we had a two hour teach-in and speak out, attended by 300 people, who then marched together in the night. Our presence was strong and we got away with no arrests. A cop got tossed from his horse. Today was our time to take to the streets, we chanted "Reclaim the Streets, Reclaim the Genes" and "I-S-A-G, Fuck your Biotechnology".<sup>2</sup>

Only a few months before in Boston the state had prepared while the rebels were unable to put up street resistance. By the time the ISAG conference came along, the police needed to use heavy force. They fired bean bag rounds, rubber bullets, pepper spray and used batons and still failed to clear the streets of resistance. That night, gun wielding cops stormed one activist house and tried to frame some of its inhabitants on drug



dealing charges. This repression will not break the rebels' resolve.

The tailing off of anti-GM sabotage at the end of the 80s was due to contemporary events in EFI. A widespread state repression campaign culminated in the FBI car bombing California EFlers, and a SWAT team arresting EFlers attempting to down powerlines in the Arizona desert. Dave Foreman, EFI's co-founder and editor of the sabotage handbook *Ecodefence* awoke in bed looking down the barrel of a cop's gun.

People became understandably afraid. A split within EFI partly exacerbated by repression led to it taking an ostensibly more 'revolutionary' path, but one that was more concerned with civil disobedience than sabotage. Even wilderness defence saw a decrease in ecotage, and the anti-GM campaign as a new front simply didn't survive.

The 90s have seen the US movement trying to reconcile the contradictions these times left it with. In the re-emergence of anti-GM resistance we see the convergence of mass street action with social change aims and wilderness-ethic sabotage. This is extremely healthy for the movement as a whole. Let's hope however that this new flurry of action does not lead to the type of attacks the movement suffered from a decade ago. Even if it does, maybe now the movement is more prepared. As one of those raided after ISAG put it in a statement to the City Council:

"We will continue no matter how many times you kick us in the face or pepper spray us. We will continue despite your truncheon blows or shooting us with rubber bullets, because what does not kill us makes us stronger."<sup>3</sup>

As of October 2000 there have been 40 anti-GM sabotages in America. Despite Grand Juries and police surveillance our friends are still uncaptured.

For more details contact the Bioengineering Action Network (BAN), who are the best contact for the States. Serving the same function over there as the Genetic Engineering Network does over here, they are however openly loads more radical, militant and wild.

**BAN, POB 11703 Eugene, OR, 97440, USA.**

**Tel: 001 (541) 302 5020**

**Web: [www.tao.ca/~ban](http://www.tao.ca/~ban)**

**Email: [ban@tao.ca](mailto:ban@tao.ca)**

### **Eco-Clearcutting in Canada**

The increasingly effective sabotage of genetic technology in the United States soon inspired similar action over the border. In Canada forestry is a more important sector than agriculture, so most GM crop experiments, and therefore most GM resistance, has been centred on trees. On October 28th 1999 in British Columbia (BC), 400 GM trees belonging to the Westfor Corporation

were cut down, destroying five years of biotechnology research. Dave Gould, the company's Chief Financial Officer said in the *Vancouver Sun* the day after the sabotage: "This act of vandalism has set back people's work quite a few years. If you have been working on a book, and you come in and your hard drive failed—some of them described it like that. It's this emptiness, and what do you do? There's nothing you can do. Some of it's down on paper but most of it is in this tree that's now been cut in half. It's destroyed".

This was followed three days later with an attack on 1,000 cedar, Douglas fir and other assorted evergreen trees at another research site in BC. According to communiqué spokesperson Gerrard Winstanley, the aim of the action was to stop the company:



*Minnesota's underground crop saboteurs, the Bolt Weevils in action! The Bolt Weevils cut down large amounts of GE corn at Pioneer and Novartis last year.*





## THE NIGHTTIME GARDENERS

Out now! The latest edition of *The Nighttime Gardener: The Guide for the Shy Gardener in North America*. Copies available for trade, stamps or blank money orders from: Nighttime Gardeners, c/o POB 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, USA.

On the web at: [www.lao.ca/ban](http://www.lao.ca/ban)

Email: [nighttimegardeners@angelfire.com](mailto:nighttimegardeners@angelfire.com)

"Westfor is replacing temperate rainforests with genetically mutilated Frankenforests. GE forestry research is alarmingly prevalent across the globe, and Canada is no exception, particularly here in British Columbia. BC has gained a notorious reputation for the rapid liquidation of its last remaining ancient native forests. The dying logging industry realises it can't log to infinity, and is worried. The industry's capitalist quick fix lies in the horrors of biotechnology. It is clear that all forest defenders must now not only stop the clearcutting of the last fragments of old growth forest, but must also stop GE dead in its tracks."

This action was followed up in mid November by the destruction of several hundred GM fruit trees at another research site in BC.

Overt resistance broke out at the end of January when negotiations for a global 'biosafety protocol' brought delegates from the world's nation states to Montreal. The previous round of negotiations had collapsed after a protracted diplomatic conflict between governments of the West on one hand and the governments of the global South on the other. The negotiations underlined the Western corporate elite's control of global biological 'resources' while putting in no meaningful measures against the dangers of GM. The negotiations' main role according to the Chairperson of the African group of delegates at the previous round, is to allow the Western elite to "fool its own public".<sup>4</sup> Not everyone was fooled.

1,000 people marched to the conference centre while inside a press conference was disrupted when the chairman of the Global Industry Coalition was pied. The pie thrower's exclamation of 'Gloop-Gloop!' as he fled is the trademark battle cry of *Les Entartistes* (Pie-Throwers), a Quebec group that targets federalist politicians and business leaders.

Simultaneously a solidarity demo with the Canadian protesters happened outside Canada House in Trafalgar Square in London. Banners such as 'Gene Dictators—The World is Watching' were dropped from the roof and 'transgenic' cows invaded the building! Another case of when you lack power you ratchet up the weirdness.

The next big date on the GM conference circuit was in March at Bio 2000 in Boston, the largest ever convention of the biotech industry. Canadian activists sent fraternal greetings to groups resisting Bio 2000 in America by timing their clearcut of hundreds of GM trees to coincide with the conference. According to the communiqué: "We cut, sawed, snapped and lopped young trees and ring barked the larger trees (sized from 8-25 ft.), mature cottonwood and conifers. When the police showed up before we could finish our work we retreated to the shadows under the protection of night... One may wonder why the ministry 'tree improvement' branch would want to try and 'improve' trees. They are perfect already. They might not be perfectly manufactured for industry, but for their symbiotic relationships in nature they are. We could never begin to understand the fragile and minute beauty of how trees form and what relationships they have to the flora and fauna around them. According to government figures, almost 10% of the new trees planted in Canada are from GE propagules".

## Nighttime and Daytime Daring in Britain

The destruction of GM test sites has been going on in Britain since 1997. In 1999 over 40 test sites were destroyed, over half of those planted. This year Britain remains the country in the industrialised world with the most effective resistance to GM. Widespread distrust of scientists, especially around food issues, media hysteria over health dangers, grassroots campaigning and highly effective sabotage has seriously put back the GM food industry.

After years of failed propaganda campaigns the industry has still not managed to get the go-ahead for commercial GM growing. The last twelve months have seen for the first time 'farmscale trials' with very large areas—some up to 50 acres. It is unclear whether the logic behind these farmscales is scientific or political. It could be that the corporations want to ease GM into the countryside. If people accept farmscale



'experiments' then it's not far to accepting farmscale agriculture. However in the words of *Farmers Weekly*: "Moves to introduce GM crops onto UK farms have faltered in the face of intense opposition". (15/9/00)

The idea of moving from attacking small crop areas to entire fields must have been daunting to say the least. The increased size of the targets necessitated an increase in the numbers of saboteurs. Up until this year nighttime covert actions had mostly been carried out by teams of under a dozen. Now many actions have had to be organised with dozens of people involved. To transport that number of people around country lanes at night, destroy entire fields of crops and leave the area undetected has been no mean feat. Yet so far few have been arrested, no one jailed, and at the time of writing five of the twelve oilseed rape sites and four of the twelve maize sites have been sabotaged.

After the first three of these actions, Chris Pollock, Head of the UK Scientific Steering Committee on Farm Scale Evaluations said repeated attacks on the sites risked undermining the entire project. "Obviously we have concerns that the numbers of trials are low and that any damage to them which affects the ability to collect data will have an effect on the total pool of information," he told BBC Radio. He also said that scientists needed 60-75 sites over three years to ascertain if GM has any environmental fall out. In spring this year only 48 farm scale trial sites were planted, well short of the government's target. Eight farmers had changed their minds and pulled out of the trials under pressure. The continuation of the programme which started with only two thirds of the intended number of sites and has now had nearly a quarter of its sites destroyed makes a mockery of the scientific pretence. Now more than ever the programme looks like the industry testing the water. Well, the water's getting hotter...

Despite the drama connected with trashing the farmscales, the night to night work of disrupting further scientific research has continued. All over the country people have been creeping through the night pulling, digging and flattening crops. As of September, 16 oilseed rape sites, three sugar beet sites and the only GM wheat site in the country have been destroyed.

Autumn is the time when the new season of winter GM sites are being sown. Prevention is better than cure. With this in mind the campaign was escalated in August with a UK first—the trashing of farm equipment belonging to farmers hosting GM sites. It was felt that at this crucial harvest time, this would send a strong message to the farmers preparing to plant GM. The National Farmers Union spokesman on biotechnology had his machines (including a 'Dominator' combine-

harvester!) sprayed and sabbed. Days later another owner of a farm hosting GM experiments was visited and his farm machinery sabotaged. The action, which was reported in *Farmers Weekly*, was (according to a widely circulated email communiqué) aimed at intimidating farmers out of "complicity with the corporations". With the government and research companies already finding it difficult to find site hosts, this tactic has a real chance of high effectiveness. We shall see.

Though most site 'decontaminations' have happened covertly at night, overt trashings continue. At one action in the South West at Nether Compton, three 'Grim Reapers' led 100 people into a farmscale site. The crowd set to work for 40 minutes trashing the crop until the cops came and arrested seven people. A report from the organisers stated: "Many enthusiastic people, who had been empowered by their first experience of direct action, wanted to know when the next 'picnic' is". In Scotland a similar event was pulled off at the Daviot farmscale. A hundred people rallied and got to work on the 15th August resulting in only six arrests.



These mass sabotages allow an opening into action for people not already in affinity groups. The terrain of struggle shapes the way resisting groups organise, grow or collapse. The increasingly covert nature of much of the radical ecological movement over the last few years makes these easy access actions essential.

Of the 30 plus arrested this year at sabotaged GM sites, most have had their cases dropped or heavily reduced. If unlucky, some might get minor



Human genetic experiments—  
the shocking truth!



fines or small prison sentences. Though the state would dearly like to jail any anti-GM activists it gets its hands on, it has its hands largely tied behind its back thanks to public support for the sabotages. A similar situation prevailed throughout the 90s road protest years. Once again we find that after good planning, masks and group cohesion, our best protection is public approval. Every activist jailed in a flurry of publicity breeds new saboteurs and further weakens the ideological grip of the rule of law. Nevertheless it is likely that if this battle continues, at some point in the future we could see activists serving time. It is essential that our movement supports its prisoners. The scores of prisoners resulting from June 18th, November 30th and May 1st have not been given the support they deserve. The same mistake should not be made when we get new anti-GM jailings. Remember: write to a prisoner—not your MPI

In Britain, as elsewhere, genetic technology is only really being resisted in the realm of crops. Animal and human genetic experiments are being allowed to develop unheeded. The medical-industrial complex has so far escaped wrath due to its almost sacred position in our society. In confronting human genetics (or 'eugenics' as it used to be called), activists will have to face ingrained ideologies about life, death, imperialism, health and disability. Last winter the annual conference of the notorious Galton Institute hosted one of the first British demos against human genetic engineering. Francis Galton was one of the

main ideological inspirations behind Nazi attempts to 'cleanse the Volk' and the forced sterilisation of the disabled in Scandinavia.

In May, activists from EF! and the Disabled People's Direct Action Network came together for demonstrations at the multi-million pound International Centre for Life in Newcastle. The protest march and street theatre coincided with the opening of the 'LIFE Interactive World' visitors centre. TV presenter Carol Vorderman was confronted by goose-stepping activists in Gestapo uniforms highlighting the links between Nazi-style eugenics and human genetic engineering.

This year there have been three seismic shifts in resistance to GM in Britain. Firstly, nighttime gardening has been forced to evolve from an activity only needing a handful of activists to coordinated actions carried out by dozens. Secondly, sabotage has moved from only targeting corporate experiments to sabotaging the personal property and machines of the farmers who allow the release to take place on 'their' land. Thirdly, a campaign, however minor at this stage, against human genetic engineering has been born.

A survey published in an article entitled 'Plant Rage May Uproot Experts' (*Times Higher Educational Supplement* 20/10/00), stated that one in four senior GM scientists has considered quitting Britain. Of 124 scientists surveyed 24 said the situation was so bad that they were moving abroad. The article further stated that:

"The anti-GM climate made 38% of scientists who use the technology more likely to advise a young plant scientist to leave the country... the anti-GM campaign had... placed constraints on the range of experiments, led to projects being suspended, to commercial organisations cutting funding and farmers refusing to cooperate, fearing attacks on their fields."

One industry spokesman said the campaign had dissuaded some firms from UK GM investment, for example causing the cancellation of a planned research centre in Cambridge. The article as a whole confirmed that the anti-GM strategy of direct interference with research and further building a "climate of distrust and opposition" is really working. A brain drain is quickening with more GM-technologists leaving Britain. One respondent said, "an increasing number of high-profile people are going abroad and they will not necessarily come back".

Happily the article ended with a top tip for campaigners and probably an accurate forecast from a Leicester University Botany Professor: "As yet, the anti-GM lobby has not tried to stop us using transgenic technology in pure research. But I can foresee a day when the campaigners may become so successful in their current goals that they will".



The next year will be a decisive one for both genetic technology and its opposition. Will GM be allowed to grow here commercially as it is in twelve other countries? Will the escalation of resistance cause a rift between liberals and radicals, 'discrediting the campaign in the minds of right thinking people'? Will the brain drain of GM-technologists continue? Whatever happens, the battle around GM is helping more people to question technology and get involved in the radical ecological resistance. The struggle is forcing a steep learning curve on the movement, one that it can only benefit from.

The nighttime raids will continue. The daytime trashings will not subside. GM technology has nowhere to hide.

The best UK genetics website is undoubtedly Primal Seeds at: [www.primalseeds.org](http://www.primalseeds.org) For regular anti-genetics news subscribe to the *Genetix Update*, the newsletter of the Genetic Engineering Network. Send cheques or postal orders made out to 'Genetix Update' for £5 (£15 outside Europe) to:

**Genetics Update, c/o Totnes Genetics Group,  
PO Box 77, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5ZL, UK.  
Tel: 01803 840098  
Email: [info@togg.org.uk](mailto:info@togg.org.uk)**

## Going Ga Ga over GM in Genoa

A determined, battling demonstration closed yesterday [May 25th 2000], the first day of the worldwide biotech exhibition in Genoa. Alas, we count several wounded among comrades and two arrests accused of having broken down the glass windows of a bank.

Many thousands of demonstrators gathered at 9.00am in front of Genoa station for what the media were describing as the Italian Seattle. There were people from all over Italy and comrades from Switzerland, France and Germany. More than 400 grassroots groups endorsed this demonstration: there were anarchists from Milan, Genoa and Rome; the social centres from all over Italy, groups from the 'Green Galaxy' and a lot of other people. Also two political parties, the Greens and the Refounded Communist Party, joined the demonstration. [Worried about the direct action, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth pulled out.]

At 10.30am the demo started. Despite being a working day we were 10,000 strong. The demo was led by 1,000 'White Overalls' ready for the action with gas masks, shields and protective padding all over the body—but no weapons, no sticks, stones or bottles... Behind them were the anarchists and then the rest of the people. Greens and Refounded Commies closed the demo.

Without losing time, we marched directly from the station to the exhibition, guarded by 3,000 riot

police. Once arrived, the confrontation was almost immediate. We wanted to enter, they wanted to keep us out and away while the managers and technocrats were inside deciding our future. The first police attack started when the White Overalls advanced almost to the entrance gate—it was wild, and coordination was made extremely difficult by a helicopter hovering 10 metres above our heads. However, the White Overalls' protections were good enough to resist the attack and push back the cops against the gate.

There followed half an hour full of tension, then came the second police attack. This was extremely difficult to contain, because they attacked on two sides (front and right side) and the right side was not protected by the padded-up White Overalls, so people had to resist with bare hands. And there we had wounded comrades, at least 4—one with a broken leg from a rubber bullet was taken to hospital. However, the second attack was pushed back and the exhibition was besieged. Under a very hot sun, more than 5,000 people yelled and blocked the entrance. Nobody could enter or exit anymore, not even the cops who themselves retreated behind the closed gates. The large square in front of the exhibition was completely ours.

"Finally they gave up and the conference was closed for the whole afternoon. Demonstrators then moved off for a celebration at a nearby action camp. The following day a counter-conference was held with among others a speaker from the Karnataka Farmers Union (KRRS)."

(Taken from an email report of the action from Ya Basta! Italy)

Once again it has been shown that our action can effectively disrupt gatherings of the global managers. The main purpose of the Genoa conference was to unify the biotech industry and kickstart a propaganda counter-offensive in support of GM. Their plans backfired. In fear, half of the biotech companies invited did not even turn up. Instead of unifying support it unified opposition. The political atmosphere around the Genoa days has led scores of Italian town councils to declare their territory GM Free Zones. The government has been forced to back away from its overt support of GM and thousands of people have been inspired by the success of the resistance. Valuable lessons have been learned but some questions remain unanswered.

In many ways Genoa was inspired by Seattle, bringing with it many of its contradictions. Next time in Italy a situation in this struggle arises, will practical and ideological disagreements over tactics and aims splinter the fragile unity? The role of the White Overalls has been described by Italian friends as civil disobedience rather than conflict. They are more like the Kiwi Anti-Apartheid



demonstrators described in last issue of *Do or Die* than autonomist black blocs. In fact when some of the crowd smashed in bank windows, various elements—some even among the White Overalls—condemned the damage. Will the White Overalls move from active resistance to pro-active attack? How can anarchists march with statists either left or green? Will this mass resistance evolve into a sustained attack on the Italian biotech industry? Italy, like other Southern European countries, is lagging behind the rest of the industrialised world in GM experiments. As they increase, will overt opposition turn to covert destruction? Let's hope the joy of crop trashing soon reaches the fiery Italians.

**Terra Salvaggia (Wild Earth magazine), Silvestro, via Fucini 17, 56100 Pisa, Italy.**

**Ya Basta!, Via Watteau 7, 20125, Milano, Italy.  
Tel: 0039 2 67 05 185  
Email: [yabasta@tin.it](mailto:yabasta@tin.it)**

## **Bangladeshis Bugger Birthday Bash**

The 70s saw a massive push by the global elite to enclose, industrialise and chemicalise Third/Majority World agriculture. This process of poisoning and social dislocation was named the 'green revolution'. It was spearheaded by the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), who celebrated their 40th anniversary on the 4th April this year. Others were not in the mood for celebration.

Hundreds of Filipino peasant rice growers surrounded the IRRI shouting "IRRI Out" and "No to GMO". Scared, the IRRI was forced to move the ceremony to the heavily guarded presidential palace which itself was soon surrounded by demonstrators. Speakers at the action said that the IRRI's much-vaunted green revolution promoted the US agenda of counter-insurgency and corporate dominance of domestic agriculture while causing a vast loss of biological diversity in rice paddies throughout Asia.

The campaign against GM has been escalating in the Philippines and peasant groups say sabotage might soon be used to halt new IRRI genetic rice experiments. Taking part in the action were peasant representatives from Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan. Cheers greeted the news that 3,000 Bangladeshis were marching in Dacca and other cities to support the Filipino movement to close down the IRRI. Like the Philippines, Bangladesh has lost almost all of its traditional rice varieties.

This action was jointly organised by the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, Pesticide Action Network (Philippines) and the Nayakrishi New Agriculture Movement of Bangladesh.

## **French in Frocks**

For years, the increasingly radical *Confederation Paysanne* has been organising against GM.<sup>5</sup> The crop trashings have continued, buoyed by massive public support. April and June 2000 saw two different types of action which have been reflected throughout the year.

A newly planted GM rapeseed test at the CETIOM research centre in Ariege was attacked on April 3rd. The centre restarted the experiment—a move they were soon to regret. Two weeks later, local greens and members of the *Confederation Paysanne* amassed at the site. 350 people armed with scythes destroyed the crop, the forearms reaping the bad harvest to the rhythm of French rural folk musicians.

Many of the hundreds were dressed in drag in memory of the 'Young Ladies' of 1827. When the state enclosed mountain forests around Ariege in the early Nineteenth Century, the local men responded by disguising themselves with white shirts, red girdles, blackened faces and sheepskins for wigs. The 'Young Ladies' of Ariege then set about a campaign of harassment and sabotage against the state. Nearly two centuries later the peasants of Ariege once again put on the garb of the 'Young Ladies' to show that the peasantry will always defend its autonomy against enclosure—this time the enclosure of the seed.

Then on June 27th, a group calling itself the 'Night Researchers' broke into a government biotech lab and destroyed organisms under study. The 'Researchers' also gained strategic information for new attacks. Similar actions have been happening throughout the year. The French anti-GM resistance, spearheaded by greens and peasants, continues to show that overt and covert sabotage can work hand in hand.

**Confederation Paysanne, 81 Avenue de la République, 93170 Bagnolet, France.  
Tel: 00 33 1436 20404**

**Email: [confpays@globenet.org](mailto:confpays@globenet.org)  
Web: [www.confederationpaysanne.fr](http://www.confederationpaysanne.fr)**

## **Dutch Spuds Smashed**

On the night of August 29th, Groen Front! (Dutch Earth First!) pulled up a field of GE potatoes located near Lelystad. The next morning, one bag of these potatoes with a communiqué was delivered to the offices of the direct action magazine *Ravage* in Amsterdam. The errant bag of spuds was eventually delivered to the man most responsible—the Minister of Agriculture—a fervent proponent of genetic engineering.

**Groen Front!, Postbus 85069, 3508 AB, Utrecht, The Netherlands.  
Email: [groenfr@dds.nl](mailto:groenfr@dds.nl)**





Pernambuco state in Brazil. After occupying an Argentine boat carrying GM crops, the MST attempted to storm and occupy a bank. Jose was shot by police during the attempted bank storming.<sup>6</sup>

## Belgium

Belgium saw its first GM trashing on May 7th 2000 when 200 people uprooted transgenic canola and maize at a Monsanto test site. The action was the finale to a 'Festival of Resistance to GMOs', which included action meetings, an organic picnic

and talks by representatives from the French *Confederation Paysanne* and the Belgian *Mouvement d'Action Paysanne*. Towards the end of the day the crowd gathered into a colourful 'seed party' and walked joyfully to the experimental centre. They entered the fields and destroyed several parcels of maize and canola while dancing along to rock band Reni Binami who played from a nearby truck.

**Tel:** 00 32 3 319 58 89

**Email:** [intercage@voila.fr](mailto:intercage@voila.fr)

## Ecuador

Though Ecuador has had a legal ban on imports of GM crops since 1997, some shipments have been brought in by stealth. Early this year when Ecuador Ecological Action was warned of one such shipment coming in by North American activists, they linked up with the National Peasant Organisation and took direct action. Two small boats were used to cut off the ship *Frina*, board it and keep it from approaching the port. The ship contained 30,000 tonnes of transgenic soya.

## Croatia

Green Action in Croatia have been running a campaign against genetic technology since the summer of 1999. As well as awareness raising they have done "several actions on corn experimental fields in Zagreb and Osijek in Summer 1999, also in front of several firms including Pioneer".

## Ireland

"The opponents of biotechnology are trying to subvert the democratic process. They have chosen the route of destruction rather than debate"—Patrick O'Reilly, Monsanto's business manager in Ireland. (Reuters 16/8/99)

Monsanto originally planted 10 sites in Ireland but when six farmers pulled out after realising their farms would become targets, the research was left in shambles. By mid August 1999 Monsanto's remaining four sites had all been trashed. The normal way to destroy GM sugar beet crops is to dig and cut them up, but the Irish innovated. One site was sprayed with petrol-based chemicals which destroyed 60% of the plants. The actions were claimed by the 'Little Fairies'.

## Brazil

Jose Marluco da Silva, age 47, a Landless Workers Movement (MST) activist, was shot and killed on the 25th July 2000 during an anti-biotech action in Recife, the capital of the North Eastern

## Pineapples Shoved Down Under

On March 12th 2000 a group calling itself the Free Seed Liberation Front up-ended and trampled more than 200 GM pineapples in a field trial near Brisbane, Australia. The pineapples growing at the Horticulture Research Station were genetically engineered to flower simultaneously. This would then allow the pineapples to be harvested and processed at the same time. Protesters breached a two and a half metre high barbed wire fence to carry out the late night raid. Anna Manzoney, public affairs director for Avcare Ltd., an industry body representing biotechnology companies and manufacturers of agricultural chemicals, was quoted as saying: "They knew what they were doing, it wasn't a disorganised attack". Australia is trialling 21 genetically modified crops at secret locations around the country. Commercial production of genetically modified crops is presently limited to cotton and carnations.

## Notes

- 1) See *Earth First! Journal*, June/July 1987
- 2) 'Reclaim the Streets! Reclaim the Genes!', 24/7/00  
See: [www.einfo.ca/00/jul/einfo00304.html](http://www.einfo.ca/00/jul/einfo00304.html)
- 3) Grain Rage statement to Minneapolis City Council, 16/8/00
- 4) 'Of Power Affirmed to Men and Safety Denied to Life', *Third World Resurgence*, issue 106. See: [www.thirdworldresurgence.org](http://www.thirdworldresurgence.org)
- 5) See 'The Peasants are Revolting... in France', *Do or Die* No.8, p.103
- 6) Taken from the *Earth Liberation Prisoners Newsletter*, September 2000. ELP Newsletter, BM Box 2407, London, WC1N 3XX, UK.  
Email: [earthlibrisoner@hotmail.com](mailto:earthlibrisoner@hotmail.com)  
Web: [www.geocities.com/earthlibrisoner](http://www.geocities.com/earthlibrisoner)



# Struggles South of the Pyrenees



**After decades of fascist dictatorship in the Spanish state, there was a huge upturn in struggle in the 1970s. Popular movements and autonomous workplace activity, strikes and mass demos were eventually defused by the 'democratic consensus' of the political parties and unions in the transition to constitutional democracy. In recent years the level of struggle has looked tame compared with the upheavals of the 70s, but in some areas important social and ecological battles are being fought.**

After the transition from fascism to democracy, the Spanish state<sup>1</sup> joined the Common Market; this young democracy becoming integrated into the European and world markets with all the consequent economic restructuring and flexibilisation of the labour market that this entailed. Today the Spanish economy has been transformed into a services economy heavily dependent on tourism and commerce. All the while the dominant ideology of modernisation is rammed down people's throats: 'how wonderful it is to live in a modern European country!'

Against this, the squatted social centres movement (especially in Catalonia and Madrid) is flexing its muscles in the face of repression under the new Penal Code. Struggles are going on in many cities against property and land speculation as neighbourhood and environmental groups team up to fight urban sprawl and huge

infrastructure projects. There are the continuing campaigns against the Itoliz dam, industrial wind power plants and the TAV high speed rail link between Madrid and Paris. Also noteworthy are the ongoing campaigns of sabotage against the savage exploitation of the ETTs (*Empresas de Trabajo Temporal*—temporary work agencies). And in several Spanish cities there have been 'Weeks of Social Struggle'—an attempt to unite these different social movements.

But before looking at the contemporary landscape of struggle in the Spanish state, it's worth briefly turning the clock back a quarter of a century to set today's movements in a historical context...

## **Autonomous Proletarian Organisation**

In many countries around the world, the 70s saw a major upswing in class struggle; in the Spanish state, this coincided with and hastened



the decay of the Francoist regime which had triumphed in the 1936-39 civil war and its transition to democracy.<sup>2</sup> Francoism was no longer the most adequate regime for the management of capitalism in the Spanish state, and democracy was now necessary to guarantee continued bourgeois control over society.

Capitalism was severely shaken by the outbreak of wildcat strike movements, especially in the years 1976-78, which were organised autonomously by workers outside and against the unions and political parties of the opposition. The assemblies movement threatened to unite the working class and reach beyond demands for wage increases and shorter working hours to the point where the continued existence of wage labour itself might be put in question. Certainly the assemblies contained within themselves this potential: "by adopting as fundamental principles, beyond any possible discussion, 'All power to the assemblies of the working class' and 'Everything within the assembly, nothing outside it', they took the initiative that could lead to the revolution that must leave nothing exterior to it".<sup>3</sup>

The assemblies were mass meetings of thousands of workers, which then elected recallable delegates to form strike committees and to liaise with other workplaces in struggle. In Madrid 320,000 workers primarily in the construction and metal-working industries were involved in struggles galvanised by the autonomous movement of the workers; there were big strike movements in Baix Llobregat, Málaga, Barcelona, the shoe-makers industry in Alacant (Alicante),<sup>4</sup> the ceramics industry in Castelló (Castellón) in València, Gava near Barcelona, Valladolid and many other places. The assemblies movement extended beyond the workplace, with neighbourhood assemblies forming their own subversive associations, particularly in the Basque Country.

Given the near-insurrectionary situation that existed, with proletarian mobilisations spreading to the streets and riots in Cádiz, Málaga, Vigo, Gasteiz (Vitoria) in the Basque Country, and elsewhere, and with looting and sabotage attacking the basic element of capitalism—the commodity,<sup>5</sup> who was to save the bourgeois order? It was left to a combination of recuperation of these struggles by the politico-union bureaucracies and repression by the police and army. The opposition parties and unions (who at this time were snuggling up to the neo-Francoist government after Franco's death, hoping to carve out a niche for themselves as Francoism embraced democracy) began to organise against the assemblies movement. When that failed, then there were always the bullets of the police, as in Gasteiz where five workers were killed by police on the 3rd of March 1976 after months of strikes had culminated in a general strike and

barricades had gone up across the city. The threat of violent repression was never far off for the assemblies movement, criminalised by the media and attacked by the unions and political parties. The state railway network RENFE was placed under military control (as was the Post Office and the Metro) after a big strike for a collective contract and a series of other demands in January 1976.

However, for the bourgeoisie, the preferred means of containing and disarming proletarian struggle was to delegate this task to the trade unions and political parties. These, by a range of tactics ranging from manipulation and deceit to intimidation, managed to outmanoeuvre the assemblies and wangle their way into positions of negotiating with the bosses and the state. Once in these positions, they could usually successfully defuse conflict by negotiating very watered down demands and caving in to management at the earliest opportunity, something the Stalinists were particularly adept at. The parliamentary elections in 1977 and the union elections in 78 marked the waning of the autonomous proletarian movement and the democratic stabilisation of Spanish capitalism. "Francoism definitely had now become completely democratic and the opposition completely Francoist, with their democracy closing the door to the revolution."

## Class Struggle in the 21st Century

So, more than twenty years after the huge upturn in struggle during the transition, what is the current panorama of class struggle in the Spanish state? At first glance it is not a pretty picture; the transition from a dictatorial model to democratic model of management of capitalism has merely meant the readjustment and strengthening of the system of exploitation and capitalist accumulation.

With the restructuring of the economy on a global level as a response to rising levels of class struggle in the 60s and 70s in industrialised countries, the Spanish state has been progressively de-industrialised while the services sector and tourism has grown. There have been protracted struggles in industries such as shipbuilding, with striking workers often using forceful tactics such as burning barricades in



"Tools for workers' self-defence."

Cádiz, Puerto Real and Xixón (Gijón) among other places. But too often these are losing battles.

Old entrenched workforces are outmanoeuvred by capital, the new economy is more and more





based on services and commerce and casualised workforces are more and more the norm. This tendency has been reinforced by recent legislation from both the Socialist and the Popular Party governments. Under this new model of liberalism, one sector of the economy especially has flourished: the ETTs (temp agencies). ETTs made profits of a billion pesetas in 1998 (£3.6 million).<sup>6</sup> Flexibilisation of the labour market has been a fundamental part of the capitalist strategy to increase profitability, and this has resulted in increased misery and poverty and worse working conditions for those who work. Coupled with this have been drastic cuts in the welfare state and social spending, which were further obstacles to increased profitability for the capitalist class. Another element of the strategy has been the privatisation of state owned entities like *Correos y Telegrafos* (the Post Office) and *Telefónica* (Telecommunications).

The statistics speak for themselves: 3 million people are unemployed and less than a million of these get any unemployment benefit; 7 out of every 10 of those in work are on temporary or part-time contracts often called *contratos basura* ('rubbish contracts'); 9 million people (almost a third of the population) live on or below the official poverty line.

What of the role of the trade unions in this continual attack on the working class? The mainstream unions CCOO, UGT, CGT and USO<sup>7</sup> continue to make pacts with the bosses and do their best to contain any vestiges of struggle. The anarcho-syndicalist CNT<sup>8</sup> is much less significant in the workplace after the damaging split with the more reformist CGT. When there has been struggle, results have been mixed, as a quick glance at conflicts up and down the Spanish state will show us.

In the fast growing telemarketing sector, 90% of contracts are temporary; large companies farm out their telephone customer services to new telemarketing companies, which in turn sub-contract to temp agencies. The vast majority of jobs which used to be on a fixed contract are now using temps ('using' being the operative word), who get 80,000 pesetas (£290) a month where the fixed contract workers used to earn 200,000 pesetas (£725). At the end of June 2000 there was a demonstration in Madrid against the crap collective bargain for this sector negotiated by the mainstream unions, with 300 people, some of whom got truncheoned by riot cops.

After a strike all over the Spanish state of temporary workers contracted by the DTG temp agency at telecommunications company Airtel, in



which the workers were asking among other things for a raise in their wages of 470 pesetas (£1.70) an hour (and they were only allowed toilet breaks of 4 minutes!) the company sacked all 700 strikers.

In February 2000 there was open warfare on the streets of Ixón (Gijón) between workers of the shipyard *Naval Gijón* and riot cops, with workers burning barricades and turning round buses to block the streets in protest at the decision to lay off 99 workers. The shipyard is threatened with closure. At the same time the workers of the other shipyard in Ixón, *Juliana Constructora Gijonesa*, were working to rule and demonstrating against the proposed privatisation of their yard. Confrontations with the police, sabotage and strikes have also been the order of the day for the past year at RENFE, the state-owned rail network, soon to be privatised.

In February 2000 there was a strike in the construction industry over accidents at work (4 people are killed at work every day in the Spanish state, that's 9,220 deaths in the 90s, with 92,420 serious injuries). In the Spanish state there's a song with a very catchy tune which goes: "Me matan si no trabajo/Y si trabajo me matan" ("They kill me if I don't work/And if I work they kill me")... The CNT called a demo of a thousand people in December 99 against "Accidents at Work—Entrepreneurial Terrorism!"

Many temp agencies have been the targets of direct action up and down the Spanish state, frequently suffering occupations, pickets, broken windows, glued locks and the odd molotov cocktail. In fact, while in Britain it was always butcher's shops and McDonald's that were top of the hit-parade, in the Spanish state the temp agencies are pushing hole in the wall cash dispensers for that number one spot. In fact so bad did it get for the temp agencies in the working-class barrio<sup>9</sup> of Malasaña in Madrid that the last one pulled out in May 2000.

The struggle against the exploitation of temp workers acts as something of an interface between the world of workplace struggle and the subculture of autonomous groups (perhaps the closest equivalent to the 'direct action movement' in the UK). Much activism in the Spanish state is organised through autonomous groups which meet regularly, often in squatted social centres. An example of this in Madrid is the network of twelve autonomous groups called *Lucha Autónoma* (Autonomous Struggle); most of these groups are based in a particular barrio of the city. *Lucha Autónoma* has as its main mission "to promote and participate in mobilisations, direct action and any other expressions of struggle which weave a social network of resistance and self-organisation, building a new antagonist subjectivity capable of



The CNT is an anarcho-sindicalist union formed in the early years of the last century. After being forced into exile during the years of fascist dictatorship, the CNT got a chance to re-establish itself with the coming of democracy in the 70s. However in the early 80s it suffered a damaging split that resulted in the formation of the breakaway CGT, which wanted to build a bigger union by watering down the politics.

There was a 15 year legal battle over which organisation got to use the name 'CNT', which was given added importance because the CNT has been trying to reclaim by legal means all the property it owned which was seized by Franco. The organisation which got the name 'CNT' would also have a chance of getting the money. Today, the value of the property they are trying to reclaim comes to about 20 billion pesetas (approx £78 million). In the mid 90s the legal battle for the name was resolved in favour of the more radical faction, since when the CNT has begun to recover and grow.

Today the CNT has between 50,000 and 100,000 members across the Spanish state, with maybe 100-150 in each town or city. In contrast to all other unions, the CNT has no paid officials—all positions in the union are filled by volunteers who do their union work in their spare time. All unions in the Spanish state receive funding from the government except the CNT, which refuses it, recognising the state subsidy as a way of keeping the unions in line.

The CNT is involved in lots of different struggles—they have a cop-watch section and do legal help for immigrants, they have also organised RTS-style street parties and co-ops, like co-op bars etc. They will typically use direct action and legal battles together. For example, they have occupied and squatted some of the buildings that now belong to the government that used to belong to the CNT. As they can't use more radical tactics under the banner of the CNT, in a struggle they will for example do black bloc actions by smashing up the boss' car or local offices of the political parties in tandem with legal actions and demonstrations.



liberating spaces or territories from the logic of money and its different ramifications". Sounds all right to me (this is typical autonomist-speak, but you get the general drift!).

Amongst isolated groups of workers and marginal autonomous groups the class struggle briefly flares up, but all too often losing battles are being fought, or there is no struggle at all and the state, bosses and unions enjoy a cosy relationship at the expense of the workers.

## Women Changing the World

The struggle against patriarchy is particularly arduous in the Mediterranean countries where macho attitudes remain deeply embedded (or perhaps not as disguised as in Northern Europe). This struggle manifests itself in many subtle ways with women confronting sexism daily on an individual basis, but occasionally women come together to make a loud collective noise.

In València for example there are several active women's groups: *Fem\*mes* and *Dones Agrícoles*, and one of the squatted social centres *La Jerónima* is powered predominantly by women. Another centre for women's organising is the women's squatted social centre *La Eskalera Karakola* (The Spiral Staircase) in Madrid where they regularly have workshops on things like self-defence, acrobatics, games based on cooperation, *fiestas de meiga* ('wise women's parties') as well as a women's pub and a whole range of other activities.

Occasionally women take to the streets *en masse*, such as for the Reclaim the Night demonstrations, and on International Working Women's Day on the 8th March. There was a large and festive demonstration in València on the 8th March 2000 of several thousand women; among the banners was one with the slogan of "*Ni tolerància ni resignació, una resposta a cada*

*agressió*" (Neither tolerance nor resignation, a response to every attack)—reflecting a militant attitude towards sexual harassment and attacks, and traditional roles of passiveness. During the march banners were also hung from the cathedral, one saying "Good girls go to heaven, we just squat it instead." Feminist graffiti was also painted on cosmetics and clothes shops.

In Saragossa (Zaragoza) too women were mobilising on the 8th March: here one of the participating groups was *La Asamblea de Mujeres de Zaragoza* (Saragossa Women's Group), which has been going since Summer 1999 (complementing the work of the most long-standing autonomous women's group, *Ruda*). It was set up in response to the need for women to organise as women to combat sexist attitudes just as prevalent in the autonomous/anarcho scene as in wider society, and has weekly meetings and a radio programme on the local free radio, *Radio Topo*. *La Asamblea de Mujeres de Zaragoza* participated in the global women's strike on the 8th March under the slogan "Let's stop the world so we can change it! If we women stop working, everything stops!"

## Alternative Media

Cultural differences between the UK 'direct action scene' and the autonomous/anarcho scene in the Spanish state abound; one area where activity far surpasses anything seen in Britain is that of alternative media—free radios, magazines, bulletins and the Internet.

One of the most impressive developments in alternative media is the antagonist internet project *Sindominio.net* ('Sindominio' is a play on words meaning both 'without domain' and 'without domination').<sup>10</sup> Currently about a hundred different groups from all over the Spanish state have web-pages or email through the *Sindominio* GNU/Linux server, based entirely on free software. *Sindominio* consists of a domain—*Sindominio.net*, a server for web pages, a server for electronic mail, mailing lists, news (discussion groups), search engines, archives and documentation centres.

There are several alternative news agencies (a bit like a cross between *SchNEWS* and the *IndyMedia* Centres), such as *UPA* and *ACP* in Madrid, *Zitzania* (Discord) in Barcelona (which produces the weekly bulletin *Contrainfos*), *Aixeca't* (Rise Up) in València, *Agencia BCK* in Burgos. All these news agencies are now linked through *Sindominio*. Critics of cyberspace argue that with expanding reliance on the Internet there is a danger of an even more pronounced elitism than ever within social movements, with access to information and decision-making in the hands of a connected minority. However, part of the *Sindominio* project is to provide free access to the web in social centres to counteract this tendency.



"Lads look out—women are disobeying."



There are also many small-scale self-produced political zines, and there are a few well established magazines and papers such as the monthlies *Molotov* and *El Akratador* (a made up word meaning something like 'The Anarchator'), and the quarterlies: the Catalan *La Lletra A* (The Letter A) and the Basque *Ekintza Zuzena* (Direct Action), both of which publish some articles in the local lingo but most in Spanish.

A visitor from Britain will be surprised at the number of free radio stations able to operate: a few years ago *Radio Topo* (Mole Radio) and the *Centro Social Libertario* did a survey of free radios and got replies from 34 in the Spanish state.

Many of these free radios transmit 24 hours a day and 7 days a week (typically programmes are repeated at night time) and are self-financing. Quite often they are fairly powerful, being picked up all over a city and the surrounding areas, and content is usually mostly political (some of the free radios like to describe themselves as being the voice of the voiceless). The free radios fulfill a very important function in enabling people to communicate with each other and to spread the word about demos, actions, evictions and also to debate the issues of the day... they can build up quite impressive listenerships of thousands of people.

Most of the free radios are not legal, but are tolerated by the state (perhaps as a recognition of the balance of forces—attempts to close down free radios have met with big outcries and accusations of censorship). One notable exception is the long-standing *Ràdio Klara* in València, which was legalised after an attempt to shut it down: years later this has had the unfortunate consequence of allowing those whose names went down as president, treasurer, secretary etc. of the legal entity officially running the radio to pull off a coup and abolish the open, horizontal decision-making assembly and expel a number of the most politically outspoken programmes... a cautionary tale against legalisation if ever there was one!

## Land and Ecology

If one of the most active movements in Britain in the 90s was people taking direct action to stop environmental destruction, then the ecology movement in the Spanish state is small by comparison, with some notable exceptions (particularly in the Basque Country). However, it may be small, but it is perfectly formed!

Ecological campaigns are typically against the building of 'capitalist destructive infrastructure'

like the TransEuropean transport links (roads and high speed train links), the dam in Itoiz, the 'superports' in Bilbo (Bilbao) and València, and urban expansion in general.

According to the *Asamblea Anti-TAV de Euskal Herria* (Anti High Speed Train Assembly of the Basque Country) these projects "correspond to the need to

modernise and make the economy competitive, to improve economic links in accordance with the restructuring of capitalism,

whereby profit maximisation and competition lead to ever greater concentrations of property and capitals. At the same time international capital is more fluid than ever, and the different phases of the production, storage and distribution process are dispersed in different places and countries according to maximum profitability and minimum cost to entrepreneurs. This process necessitates ever greater movements of population and ever more gigantic infrastructures, as different regions compete to attract investment."

The anti-dam direct action group *Solidari@s con Itoiz*<sup>11</sup> (see below) say on the same theme: "For many years we have seen how the tendency of capital is to concentrate population in large conurbations to the detriment of rural areas, which have become more and more deserted. Rural areas are transformed into resource-zones for





large-scale transport infrastructure, production centres for energy and industrial agriculture, or for the accumulation of raw materials to satisfy the needs of large cities."

In many of the leaflets and agitprop produced by environmental groups in the Spanish state there is the message that the ecological struggle and the anti-capitalist struggle are one and the same, that there is no protecting the environment without a radical change in social relations.

One of the biggest campaigns in recent times, and one which links groups from different parts of the Spanish state, is the campaign against the 2 billion peseta (£7.3 million) high speed train links (called TAV—*Tren de Alta Velocidad*, or AVE) being built to link Paris and Madrid via both the Basque Country and Catalonia, and Madrid to València and Murcia. In the Basque Country the mountains of the North of Nafarroa (Navarre) and Gipuzkoa and borders of the provinces of Bizkaia and Araba are threatened with 128km of tunnels, and 55 viaducts will have to be built. Thousands of animal and plant species will have their habitats destroyed. According to the *Asamblea Anti-TAV de Euskal Herria* the effect on the environment will be worse even than the building of motorways. Much of the opposition to these rail links comes from people who live along or near to the routes, who will not benefit from them at all (because the normal trains won't run anymore, the AVE won't stop, and it

would be too expensive anyway!). Demonstrations in towns along the proposed routes are frequent, such as the one on 23rd May 2000 on both sides of the French-Spanish border which divides the Basque Country with 2,000 people from Irún meeting up with 500 people from Hendaya at the border under the banner of "Stop Destructive Projects—For Social Change". Also frequent are the Anti-TAV camps, particularly in the Basque Country and Catalonia, where hundreds of people set up camp temporarily in one of the affected areas as a protest, and go off and do actions and have workshops (a bit like an Earth First! Summer gathering, but with more sun).

Another area of campaigning in several cities around the Spanish state is opposition to urban development and expansion. Added to the environmental dimension is the social dimension—many people are being forced from their homes to make way for the expansion of the ports in Bilbao and València, and for other capitalist infrastructure such as new roads. In València there has been much popular protest against both the building of the port and the extension of the big avenue *Blasco Ibáñez* to serve the port, through the working-class barrio of *El Cabanyal*, where every second balcony has a banner against the road (which will involve the destruction of 1,651 homes). An empty warehouse was squatted as a protest against the road which has now become the long-standing squatted social centre *CSO Pepika La Pizona* (named in honour of a local prostitute and much loved resident of the area), one of three squatted social centres in València. Residents have organised in a group called *Plataforma Salvem El Cabanyal*, and they have had noisy protests of 3,000 people (*caceroladas*—where everyone bangs on their pots and pans) through the barrio and 6,000 outside the town hall, and hunger strikes lasting 21 days. But the local government won't budge, and the media have joined forces to defend this clear example of (capitalist) progress.

## Basque Ecological Struggles

The Basque Country is a part of the Spanish state with a long tradition of ecological struggles; in part these struggles have been interwoven with resistance to the Francoist dictatorship and with the 'national liberation' struggle. Particularly emblematic was the anti-nuclear struggle against the building of the power station in Lemoiz—in part the resistance could be explained by a feeling that an alien Spanish government indistinguishable from the previous dictatorship was riding roughshod over the interests of the Basque people and 'spoiling our beautiful Basque homeland'.

Lemoiz generated huge resistance in the 70s and 80s, from mass demonstrations, campaigns of



February 6th 1996, the cutting of the cables.



civil disobedience and strikes to acts of sabotage and bomb attacks by armed left-wing nationalist group ETA.<sup>12</sup> Port workers refused to unload components and materials for the construction of the power station, and tenants' groups refused *en masse* to pay electricity bills, and reconnected themselves when the electricity company *Iberdure* disconnected them. Lemoiz was built but was never put into operation, a massive ecological victory...

Another mass campaign was against the building of the road from Iruñea (Pamplona) to Donostia (San Sebastian). However the national liberation movement sold out on this one and supported an alternative route (a Basque alternative of course) which still involved the destruction of forests.

After the massive struggles of the 70s and 80s, how is it that ecological struggle is so fragmented today? *Eguzki* (meaning 'sun') was the environmental movement that came out of these struggles, but is now a shadow of its former self. Some people explain the decline in activity which has taken place in terms ultimately of the divisive influence of the national liberation movement in many social struggles (feminism, anti-militarism, workplace struggle), which it has sought to dominate and link (even subordinate) to national liberation. Specifically Basque nationalist groups were set up for each of these struggles, which in many cases had the effect of splintering them.

In some areas there has been something of a resurgence in recent years, with opposition to the High Speed Train link and most notably to the building of the dam in Itoiz in the Basque province of Nafarroa.

## Solidari@s con Itoiz

For the last 15 years thousands of local people have fought against the Itoiz dam in the Basque Country, arguing that the dam is destructive to nature, a danger to public safety, socially and culturally destructive, and

surrounded by a web of governmental corruption. Its construction will flood a 35km long (1,100 hectare) valley in the Basque Country. Not only is this valley an environmentally sensitive area with 5 nature reserves of great ecological value, it also contains nine villages that will all disappear under water. Contrary to government statements, the Itoiz dam will not produce much extra electricity and no serious plans for irrigation exist. Geologists also have doubts about the safety of the dam due to the instability of the surrounding slope. The dam



has become a prestige project of the Navarrese government and is riddled with corruption, nepotism and bribery. The excuse of irrigation is used to mask the real reasons for this dam—i.e. the economic interests of tourism and industry far removed from the flooded areas, to which the water would be channelled via super-canals. The case was brought to the Supreme Court of the Spanish state, which ruled that the dam was illegal. However the construction of the dam continues to this day.

Amongst the many demonstrations and actions against the dam, the most publicised was the sabotage carried out in 1996 by 8 members of the group *Solidari@s con Itoiz*, who used circular saws to cut the steel cables of the concrete transporting system in a publicly accountable action.<sup>13</sup> They entered the construction site at dawn with invited members of the press. Two of the group tied up the security guard and disposed of his gun while the other six cut through the 800-metre long cables. The construction of the dam was paralysed for a whole year because of this action. The *Solidari@s* then gave themselves up to the *Guardia Civil* (the police force in rural areas). Their reasons for doing an accountable action (as opposed to attempting to escape) were that the building of the dam had been ruled illegal, so they could argue they were merely preventing illegal activities; also, in the context of an ongoing armed struggle in the Basque Country, the *Solidari@s* didn't want to bring down military-style repression on the ecological movement.

The 8 activists were arrested, beaten and remanded, but then released on bail after massive demonstrations in Iruñea. They were eventually given 5 year sentences, but in September 1999 they jumped bail before their sentences were due to start, to embark on a European awareness-raising tour. In London they linked up with anti-Narmada dam activists to climb the Millennium Wheel, unfurling banners saying 'Free Narmada, Free Itoiz!' and 'Let the Rivers Run Free!' In Berlin they climbed the Brandenburg Gate and hung banners saying 'SOS Itoiz' and 'Sentenced to 5 Years for Defending Nature'. The following day they were at it again, climbing the Berlin Alexanderplatz TV tower. They also scaled the dome of St. Peter's in the Vatican. They next hit the Hague, doing an action at the International Court of Justice and completely disrupting the opening of the World Water Forum. The tour ended in June 2000 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

In September 1998 two women from *Solidari@s con Itoiz* sabotaged 54 pieces of machinery being used to build the road from Agoltz to Nagore, which is necessary for the construction of the secondary reservoir, without which the Itoiz dam cannot function. Nearly £3 million of damage was caused



and work on the dam was stopped for several months. In a campaign of 'feminine self-incrimination' 1,600 women signed statements saying they did the sabotage, which were then handed in to the court. As a solidarity action with these two women, who were sentenced to two years in prison, and against the dam, a group of about 30 people bricked up the door of the Spanish embassy in The Hague on June 20th 2000. In May 2000 there was an international camp against the Itoiz dam, with people coming from different parts of Europe to show solidarity. 2,500 marched in nearby Agoitz and banners were hung from cranes: "Por Itoiz No Pasara'n" ("They Shall Not Pass Through Itoiz").

The actions of sabotage against the Itoiz dam are by no means the only direct action taken by ecologists in the Spanish state. In Juncosa de les Garrigues, Catalonia, the machinery being used to build a toxic waste dump (for waste products such as arsenic, lead, cadmium, cyanide, hydraulic and motor oils, chemical and laboratory waste products) was set on fire, causing 50 million pesetas (£180,000) of damage.

Machinery was trashed at the mountain site of a windpower plant, in an action that might raise a few eyebrows. Environmentalists against windpower? Windpower is being developed industrially in the North of the Spanish state, particularly in Nafarroa and Asturias (Asturias) by electricity companies, devastating beautiful mountains; it is the scale of these wind farms, which are geared to meeting the needs of concentrated capital rather than the needs of people, which is scarring the landscape. Ecologists argue that windpower could easily be developed on a smaller, decentralised scale to meet the needs of local people without the impact on the land.

Anger at environmental destruction occasionally boils over in this way, however for the most part the trashing of the earth continues without mass opposition...

## Centres of Struggle

Another huge difference between the 'scene' in Britain and in the Spanish state is the large number of squatted social centres, typically called CSOA—*Centro Social Okupado Autogestionado* (Self-managed Squatted Social Centre) or just CSO (without the 'Self-managed' bit); in the Basque Country they are known as *Gaztetxe* (literally 'house of the young') and in Catalonia, València and the Balearics (all Catalan speaking areas) they are often called *Kasals*. If you go to Barcelona or Madrid it seems like every working-class area has one—at the last count there were 23 in and around Barcelona!

*Usurpa*, the squat movement's newspaper, publishes a timetable of weekly activities in all the



squat social centres around Barcelona available online at [www.sindominio.net/usurpa](http://www.sindominio.net/usurpa) and a similar publication called *Infousurpa* does the same for Madrid. Often the social centres are old abandoned factories, warehouses, schools and even cinemas. There was a squatted laboratory in Madrid and also in some cases military and Guardia Civil barracks are occupied (as is the case with the long-standing and renowned *Kasa de la Muntanya* in Barcelona). Activities range from flamenco classes to debates on how best to organise against temp agencies, from Tai Chi to recycling workshops; most social centres have a bar and a café and some have libraries and games rooms; many have concerts weekly and nearly all are used by local autonomous groups to have their meetings and organise activities.

While squatted social centres have been a constant feature in Madrid since the late 80s, in Barcelona they mushroomed after the squatting in 1997 of a very high profile social centre in the centre of the city in a disused cinema (*El Cine Princesa*<sup>14</sup>) attracted mass support (support was sought in quite a high profile way, enlisting various celebrities and intellectuals to try and stop the eviction). When the eviction came many people actively resisted it and the centre of Barcelona resembled a battle zone, with police firing many rounds of rubber bullets and squatters responding with molotov cocktails. In an ensuing demonstration the big police station on *Via Layetana* where political prisoners were tortured under Franco was attacked by the crowd. As a



result of the eviction the police were heavily criticised and the question was debated in the Catalan regional parliament; for a while it seemed that the possible legalisation of some social centres was on the cards (perhaps along the lines of the legalisation of squatted social centres in Germany and Italy, a ploy to divide the squatting movement: those social centres that don't accept legalisation are crushed, while those that do are often re-integrated into the world of rent, regulations and bureaucracy and often lose their antagonistic character).

In fact the state was already sharpening its claws in relation to squatting, with the introduction of a new Penal Code, which, perhaps similarly to the Criminal Justice Act in Britain, was designed to crack down on political protest. The new Penal Code criminalised squatting, or "usurping private property" (hence the name of the Barcelona squat movement newspaper *Usurpa*), with sentences of weekend arrest or fines to be paid. However, despite many cases being brought, in most instances people are acquitted, such as in the

recent case of the social centre *CSO Les Naus* in Barcelona, where the provincial court decided it was a civil matter because the occupiers had been in the building for more than a year. According to *Usurpa* this case will now become a precedent.

In recent times there have been what *Zitzania* describes as an avalanche of evictions. In Madrid, social centres *CSO Vendetta*, *CSO La Galia*, *La Atalaya y La Bola* and *CS La Biblio* (a squat library in the Lavapiés district of Madrid) have all been evicted without prior warning. According to the *Asamblea de Casas Okupadas y Centros Sociales de Madrid*,<sup>15</sup> this wave of repression reflects a new strategy on the part of the administration since the massive eviction of *CSO La Guindalera* 3 years ago, when the squatters were well prepared and resisted, with 158 of them getting arrested and big mobilisations following—there was the feeling that the movement could become powerful enough to have a voice in society and had the potential to successfully stop evictions. Since then the movement has been ground down by surprise evictions and court cases—the 62 people arrested

## Barcelona 1909



*Barcelona in flames during the uprising of July 1909.*

The spontaneous revolution Spanish anarchists had long hoped for seemed to have started on Monday 26th July 1909 when Barcelona was shut down by a massive general strike. The revolt started after the government called up military reservists to fight in Morocco. Mindful of a recent history of horrendous military campaigns, workers immediately responded to the call for a general strike. Those on strike poured into the streets in protest, trams were overturned, communications cut and troop trains held up by women sitting on the rails. The anarchist Anselmo Lorenzo wrote to a friend saying: "What is happening here is amazing. A social revolution has broken out in Barcelona and it has been started by the people. No one has instigated it. No one has led it. Neither Liberals, nor Catalan Nationalists, nor Republicans, nor Socialists, nor Anarchists."

By Tuesday Barcelona was in the hands of the people, by Thursday the army and police had mounted a counter-attack and barricades were thrown up in the streets to stop them. Behind the barricades there was mass looting. However, by the end of the week the government had regained control.

What surprised the Barcelona workers themselves the most about the uprising was the immediate success of the general strike that had started it off, and it was out of this week-long uprising that the CNT was born as an amalgamation of all the already existing anarchist and libertarian unions.

**Graves opened by workers during the uprising (left):** In defiance of religious taboos and in revolt against the authoritarian and reactionary Church, workers destroyed religious buildings, danced around in ecclesiastical vestments, coffins were opened and the corpses of nuns scattered on the pavement.

**Source:** *The Anarchists—The Men who Shocked an Era* by Roderick Kenward (Macdonald, 1971) pp.65-71







### *Life at the squatted village of Sasé in Huesca*

in the street outside *La Guindalera* are looking at 310 years prison between them if found guilty. In Barcelona 39 people are looking at 11 month sentences if convicted for resisting the eviction of the *Cine Princessa*. Also facing eviction, by none other than the Archbishop of Madrid, is *La Prospe*, a people's school that has for the last 26 years been doing popular educational work based on the principles of Paulo Freire's 'liberation pedagogy'; of assembly and self-management, with workshops on literacy, basic knowledge and Spanish for immigrants, and 'collective learning groups' on issues such as gender, popular communication, anti globalisation, jobs, unemployment and alternatives, Interculturalism, and social movements.

There have been attempts over the years to forge links between the different social centres such as the *Asamblea de Kasas Okupadas y Centros Sociales de Madrid*, to encourage networking in Madrid. However, these networks are often temporary and need to be rebuilt as social centres are evicted and people are dispersed. One recent result of this process was the demonstration networked by social centres all over the Spanish state (coaches came from as far away as *CSO Camino de Ronda 190* in Granada) in Barcelona on Saturday the 15th of April, when 4,000 people marched through the centre of the city against property speculation and the threat of eviction hanging over 30 different squatted houses and social centres. During the week leading up to the demo banners advertising it were hung from the *Sagrada Familia* Cathedral, the empty *Las Arenas* bullring and the statue of Columbus.

The agitprop for the demo attacked property speculators such as the bank *La Caixa* and the mafia-like corruption involved in property speculation (the mayor of Barcelona Joan Clos is at the head of companies *Proclvesa* and *Pro-Eixample* which make annual profits of more than 5 billion pesetas (£18,000,000) from property speculation). Also given this treatment were those responsible for building the *Itoiz* dam and evicting the squatted villages of *Rala* and *Artanga*, and the press for manipulating news stories and printing word for word police press releases. In the words of the organisers: "The slogan is STOP SPECULATION because we know that we all suffer from evictions as the consequence of brutal speculation. Today's evictions are tomorrow's

exorbitant rents, skyrocketing property prices and the inevitable exodus out to the periphery of all those of us who haven't got a before tax income of more than 4 million pesetas (£14,500) a year."

The demonstration was a lively, festive occasion with lots of banners, a truck with a sound system, and groups of drummers. Massive banners were hung along the whole route and anti-capitalist graffiti was painted on banks, estate agencies, temp work agencies and a series of other institutions involved in property speculation. Police cars were also graffitied and undercover cops in the demo had flour poured over them. When the demo reached the Ministry of Finance, a group of people climbed up to take down the Spanish and Catalan flags and replaced them on the flag-poles with puppets of police officers, let off firecrackers and hung a large banner against speculation and the eviction of *La Kasa de la Muntanya*.

### **Land and Freedom**

At the risk of starting a mass stampede of burnt out British activists south of the Pyrenees, it is true to say that there are more than 1,500 abandoned villages in the Spanish state as a result of the rural exodus, usually in remote mountainous areas. The increasing pressures of the capitalist market made life impossible for the majority of those who used to live from small-scale agriculture in the country and they flocked to the cities in search of work adding to the ranks of the urban proletariat.

It is very hard to know exactly, but there might be between thirty and forty squatted villages in the Spanish state, some of them remain virtually undiscovered by the outside world, others have made attempts to organise between them; in the 70s and 80s there was the *MAR* (Rural Alternative Movement), coordinating between several squatted villages, and today there is the *FACC* (Anarchist Federation of Collectivities in the Country) which was set up in 1990.

People's reasons for going 'back to the land' vary from village to village, and from individual to individual, but some of these projects are overtly political; the people involved in them consider that they are creating an alternative to the alienated existence of the city and capitalist social relations; however unless they achieve absolute self-







sufficiency (a very tall order), this normally means they aspire to some form of self-managed co-operative economy, such as Lakabe in Nafarroa which has quite a well established baking co-operative.

## Squatted Villages

(List compiled in 1997. Province comes first, then village.)

- ★ Pontevedra: La Cavada / La Fraga-Baños.
- ★ León: A Noltña-Sobredo (El Bierzo, member of FACC) / Mataveneros (links to Rainbow Movement, free school) / Poibueno.
- ★ Gipuzkoa: Bikunleta / Minas de Arditurri-Giartzun.
- ★ Nafarroa: Lakabe (seventeen years old, 12 adults and 14 kids, one of the symbols of the movement) / Arizkuren.
- ★ Huesca: Aineto / Artosilla / Ibort / Campol / Mipanas / Bergua / Morielo de San Pietro / Sasé.<sup>16</sup>
- ★ Girona: Lots of small communities like Mas Molar or Monars. There's also some co-ordination between houses in Girona province, mutual aid, exchange, parties etc.
- ★ Soria: Manzanares-Montejo de Tiermes / Abioncillo (village-school).
- ★ Guadalajara: Matallana.
- ★ Alacant: La Mariola-Alcoi.
- ★ Provincia de Badajoz: Las Adelfas / Villanueva de la Vera.
- ★ Huelva: El Calabacino / Los Molinos.
- ★ Málaga: Los Arenalejos-Alozaina (agricultural collective).
- ★ Tenerife: El Cabrilo.

## Semanas de Lucha Social

A recent initiative were the *Semanas de Lucha Social—Romparamos el Silencio* ('Weeks of Social Struggle—Let's Break the Silence') in different cities in the Spanish state. The idea behind them is to link different areas of social struggle together, to try to initiate a coming together of social movements.

It has to be said that the message of the accompanying agitprop is at times faintly liberal, with talk of human rights and unemployment and social exclusion and injustice. And it's true as well that the organisers of these weeks of social struggle have gone out of their way to forge a broad alliance, to such an extent that liberal groups such as *Cristianos de base* (grassroots Christians) were involved.

Each day in the week of social struggle is dedicated to a theme; for example in Madrid, this year (the third year that there has been a week of social struggle), on the first day it was a march to the chemical-military complex at La Marañosa; on the second day it was International Day of Victims of Torture, with 30 people stripping off outside the government penitentiary institutions ministry in protest at the torture, unexplained deaths, strip searches and other degrading treatment meted out to prisoners in Spanish jails; the fountains in *Plaza de Colón* were dyed red to symbolise the blood spilt in prisons; the third day was dedicated to children in care and in detention, the fourth day to public transport with a tube party and mass fare dodging which ended with partygoers getting beaten up by security and riot cops at Atocha international station where the AVE train goes from; the fifth day was dedicated to economic globalisation and Latin America, the sixth to unemployment, precariousness and social exclusion and the seventh to gender violence. The centre of Madrid was under a state of siege for much of the week as the actions were taking place, with the police taking no chances and swamping all the meeting points. Although all the actions were non-violent, several were dispersed by the heavy baton blows of the *Policia Nacional*, with lots of minor injuries and some fairly serious ones.

Last year the week of social struggle coincided with the J18 global anti-capitalist mobilisations, and included an invasion of the Madrid Stock Exchange by 100 people, the occupation of the headquarters of Banco Santander-Central Hispano and several temp agencies, and the squatting of some empty military barracks to turn them into social centres for the neighbourhood (apparently this went down very well with the locals!). Up to a hundred people also ate for free at the restaurant of *El Corte Inglés*, a big department store, by simply refusing to pay. On June 18th there was a street party (as well as the ones in Barcelona and València on that day), with initially 200 gathering in Lavapies to the sound of drummers and bagpipes, doing a mass bunk on the Metro to Puerta del Sol whilst chanting slogans in favour of free public transport. In Puerta del Sol there was a massive presence of riot cops but this did not stop the group, an enormous multi-coloured dragon at its head, from weaving its way to *Plaza de Callao* via commercial centres. Traffic was then blocked on the roads into the square; the busiest street was blocked by a friendly bus driver turning his bus





*The squatters show their strength: 4,000 people turned out for a demo against speculation in Barcelona on the 15th April.*

around to block both directions, banners were hung with slogans like "Reclaim The Streets: The Car's Killing The City", "Under The Streets. The Beach" (sound familiar?), and a truck duly turned up complete with sound system. A water hydrant was connected to a hosepipe to douse the crowd which got much bigger as the afternoon wore on (many passers-by just joining in the fun—the music and dancing went on till past midnight), and the fountains became a swimming pool. The organisers had achieved their mission: to break the silence...

Other cities where there have been weeks of social struggle include Córdoba in the South and Barcelona. In Córdoba in November 99, the idea was for "the unemployed, those in precarious conditions,<sup>17</sup> children, prisoners, anti-militarists, young people from the barrios, immigrants and women to join together to express our rejection of the status quo". They would "take to the streets as a means of popular expression and participation"; spaces would be created for these social movements to come together in action and in discussions. A very original space was taken for this purpose in Córdoba, when the *Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos*, a major tourist attraction, was occupied *en masse* to the consternation of the city authorities, who had to order the riot police (some of whom had been bussed in from Seville) to leave the grounds to avoid a confrontation.

People had come to Córdoba from far and wide, and there was a need to put them up somewhere:

many slept in the *Alcázar*, others in the squatted social centre which by this stage was surrounded by the police and had had its electricity cut off. Other actions during the week included filling dozens of bags of rubbish from the Guadalquivir river and dumping them at a local McDonald's, a 700 hundred-strong march to the local prison, and 500 hundred people occupying offices of the INEM (National Employment Institute—i.e. the dole office) in a protest against the lack of job security and the liberalisation of the labour market, with demands for *la renta básica* (universal guaranteed income).<sup>18</sup> It is noticeable that these alternatives that the groups involved in the *Semanas de Lucha Social* propose don't actually involve getting rid of capitalism, but would essentially be a reformed capitalism; another demand was "For the distribution of work! For the distribution of wealth!" and further demands were for the right to work, the right to a home, the right to health. None of this would be out of place in a leftist party programme!

In Barcelona the week had some variations on these themes: actions against social exclusion included a mass free lunch at an expensive vegetarian restaurant; the looting and sharing out of food from a fancy supermarket whilst chanting "Against unemployment, expropriation!", and the handing out of unemployment cards 'entitling' the bearer to free public transport and to pay for housing, gas, electricity, water, food and all other basic needs with IOUs from INEM.



## The Future?

"No hay futuro", say the punks on the streets in any big city—"there's no future". Is there any future for struggle in the Spanish state? Class struggle is seemingly on the wane apart from isolated pockets of resistance (during the week of social struggle in Barcelona activists carried a coffin to one of the mainstream union headquarters to symbolise the death of the working class). The (by now not so) new social movements fight their corners, and occasionally try to link up as we have seen. Too often however they are limited to activist ghettos, and are not so much social as sub-cultural movements. Capitalism appears safer than ever, and the wildcat seems an extinct species. Let us hope that the people inhabiting the land south of the Pyrenees will find a way to revive the spirit of 1909, 1936 and 1976 which has been such an inspiration to so many in the rest of the world and that we have more than a mere occasional week of social struggle to look forward to.★

## Contacts

*The following pages all list links to the movements and groups mentioned in this article (and many more!):*

[www.sindominio.net/colectivos.shtml](http://www.sindominio.net/colectivos.shtml)

[www.geocities.com/0080/CapitolHill/Lobby/7426/links.htm](http://www.geocities.com/0080/CapitolHill/Lobby/7426/links.htm)

[www.nodo50.org/](http://www.nodo50.org/)

**Solidari@s con Itolz, Apdo. 393, 31080 Iruñea, 'Spain'.**

Email: [solidarios@ythis.zzn.com](mailto:solidarios@ythis.zzn.com)

**Asamblea Anti-TAV:**

Email: [ahtez@mixmail.com](mailto:ahtez@mixmail.com)

**CNT, Secretariado Permanente, APTD. 282, C.P. 48080 Bilbao, 'Spain'.**

Email: [cnt@cnt.es](mailto:cnt@cnt.es)

Web: <http://www.cnt.es>

*The magazines La Lletra A and Ekintza Zuzena both publish useful contacts lists:*

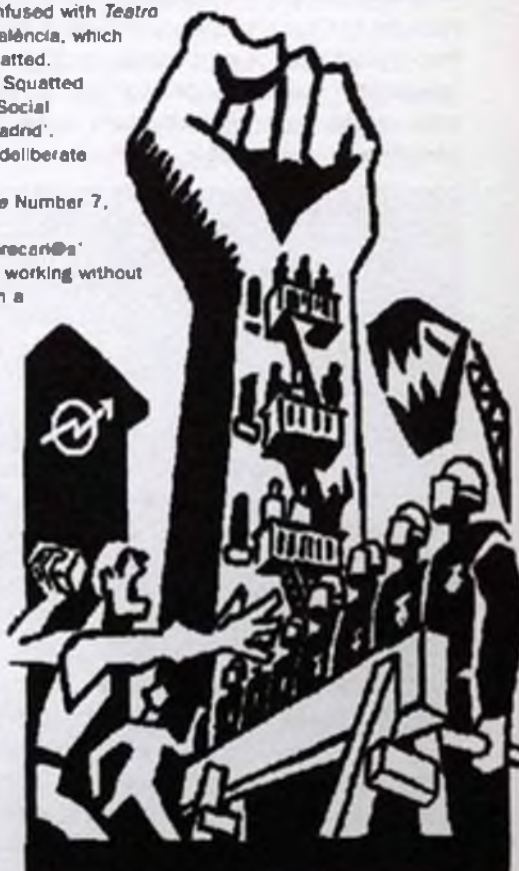
**Ekintza Zuzena, Apartado 235 Posta kutxa, 48080 Bilbo (Bizkaia), 'Spain'.**

Email: [ekintza@nodo50.org](mailto:ekintza@nodo50.org)

**La Lletra A, El Lokal, C/ de la Cera, 1 bis, 08001, Barcelona, 'Spain'.**

## Notes

- 1) The term 'Spanish state' is widely used instead of 'Spain' by nationalists in the Basque Country, Galiza (Galicia), Catalonia, Asturias (Asturias) etc. and also by radicals in general.
- 2) Franco himself died in 1975.
- 3) This quote comes from 'A Manuscript Found in Vitoria', a pamphlet signed by 'Los Incontrolados' republished in *Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy 1976-78* (London/Lisbon 1978/79).
- 4) Where appropriate, place names are given in the local lingo first and then in Spanish in brackets. Alacant is Catalan for Alicante.
- 5) "Visible through the advance of individual and collective proletarian sabotage of the commodity and labour, the economic crisis acted as a gigantic anonymous force for the decolonisation of everyday life. Whether by absenteeism, stealing from supermarkets, defying management, consciously vandalising its own products, negativity towards consumerism, etc., and above all with wildcat strikes, the proletariat criminally appeared as the historical class, affirming its desires to bury this world while continuing to work within it." (from 'Commentaries Around Wildcat Spain in The Run Up To The Second Revolution', republished in *Wildcat Spain*...)
- 6) According to *Solidaridad Obrera*, organ of the CNT.
- 7) *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers' Commissions), *Unión General de los Trabajadores* (General Workers' Union), *Confederación General del Trabajo* (General Labour Confederation), *Unión Sindical Obrera* (Workers' Trade Union).
- 8) *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (National Labour Confederation).
- 9) 'Barrio' means an area of town.
- 10) A domain is a fixed address on the internet, represented by a name which any computer from anywhere in the world can locate in order to send an email or to visualise the content of a web page. Specifically, the name of a domain usually corresponds to words to the right of the @ sign in an email address.
- 11) The '@' in 'Solidari@s' denotes masculine and feminine, as opposed to conventional usage which always uses the masculine form to denote men and women.
- 12) *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, which means 'Basque Country and Freedom'.
- 13) See *Do or Die* Number 6, p.102.
- 14) Not to be confused with *Teatro Princesa* in Valencia, which was also squatted.
- 15) 'Assembly of Squatted Houses and Social Centres of Madrid'. 'Madrid' is a deliberate misspelling.
- 16) See *Do or Die* Number 7, pp.85-87.
- 17) In Spanish 'precari@s' means those working without contract or on a short term contract, i.e. in danger of losing their jobs.
- 18) i.e. a social wage for absolutely everyone regardless of work done—this demand is quite common amongst many autonomist groups on the continent (and promoted by the Green Party in the UK).





# The Spanish Revolution

## The Civil War of 1936-39

Spain in the 1930s was a time of rising social conflict between the increasingly radical workers and the conservative establishment. Strikes, insurrections and political assassinations were commonplace throughout the country and both sides in the class war felt that events were approaching some sort of a climax. The catalyst for this proved to be the election of a left wing government in 1936—its half-hearted reforms proved even less effective at containing resistance than the previous right wing repression, and conservative and fascist elements in the army led by General Francisco Franco launched a coup in July 1936. The Republican government hesitated, unsure of how to respond to the take-over attempt—having lost control of large sections of the army, the only force capable of resisting the fascists was the organised workers, but in most areas government officials saw a fascist coup as a better option than arming revolutionary workers. Partly spontaneously and partly organised through the two main unions; the CNT (one and half million members at its largest and strongly influenced by the anarchist federation, the FAI) and the socialist UGT (of a similar size but considerably more timid), people began looting gun shops and bringing out weapons stored after previous bloody strikes and took on the fascist army units. In some areas, through threats or persuasion local governors released weapons to the workers. In others, people took on the army with whatever came to hand, usually with predictable results. After several days



*The sort of stupid thing we'd do if we had guns: Spanish revolutionaries execute a statue of Christ, 1936.*



of fighting, the army emerged victorious in some parts, the workers in others and the stage was set for a bloody civil war between the two zones.

In many areas where the army had been defeated, the Republican government had also virtually ceased to exist—its repressive forces had either defected to the fascists, joined the people or were cautiously watching developments. Armed workers patrolled the streets, and people weren't slow to take advantage of the situation, driving out bosses and landlords and beginning a social revolution in the non-fascist zones. The movement reached its peak in the rural areas, many of which were strongly anarchist and with a traditionally communal way of life. Free collectives were established, landlords driven out, and in some cases private property and money were abolished. The status of women also changed rapidly in what was previously a very openly patriarchal society, and many became active combatants in militia units. In the cities it was less far-reaching—although most factories and public services were taken over by the workers (especially in areas where the CNT was dominant), wage labour and private property for the most part remained unchallenged. The early days of the revolution were crucial—would it be pushed as far as possible or remain a half-measure? At this point the CNT,



which had attracted the most militant section of the working class after years of involvement in bitter strikes and insurrections, and was probably the only organisation in a position to take things further, made a fatal mistake. Faced with a situation of civil war, it forged an anti-fascist alliance with those groups and parties opposed to Franco—the Republican state, independent socialists, communists and regional separatists. They wanted, perhaps understandably, to defeat Franco before trying to push the revolution forwards against its enemies on the left. The result, however, was a chance for the state to re-establish itself and grow stronger, a constant stream of concessions to preserve 'unity' and the outright collaboration of the CNT leadership with the forces of counter-revolution, abandoning anarchist principles even to the extent of providing the world's first, and hopefully last, 'anarchist' ministers in central government.

The decentralised structure of the CNT was increasingly bypassed, its officials becoming an unaccountable leadership rather than administrators of decisions taken at the base. Union committees in the factories found themselves in the position of the bosses they had replaced, needing to increase production for the war effort by pushing workers harder. Workers responded by faking illness, working slowly and insisting on respecting every religious holiday they could find (despite having burned down a fair proportion of Spanish churches a few months earlier!). The voluntary militias which had defeated the army in many cities and liberated large areas of the countryside were re-organised into a regular army with rank privileges and discipline; an army which proceeded to lose almost every major battle of the civil war. The counter-revolution in Republican areas grew ever stronger, led by the Communist Party (CP). The CP grew almost from nothing to a dominant position in the Republican government due to the fact that the only country prepared to sell arms to the Republic was Stalinist Russia. Needless to say, political influence came



*Kiddies' barricades: Barcelona, 1936.*

with these supplies, which were mainly given to units loyal to the CP. Rural collectives were forcibly closed down, and dissidents arrested or executed—particular targets were anarchists who opposed the CNT leadership's collaboration and non-Stalinist communist groups such as the POUM. By the time of the final military defeat of the Republican army by the fascists there was very little of the revolution left to defend.

With the benefit of hindsight it's easy to see that revolutionaries at the time had no real choice but to go for broke, pushing forward the revolution as far as they could. However that is no guarantee of victory, and perhaps the advocates of 'anti-fascist' unity made a realistic appraisal of the chances of all-out social revolution succeeding against its enemies on both the right and the left at once—they may well have faced a no-win situation whatever they did. Nevertheless, the path of compromise led to disaster, and that's an important lesson to be learned from the Spanish revolution. By taking sides with democracy against fascism, anarchists ended up supporting one form of capitalism against another, and it was the anti-fascist form that managed to destroy the revolution long before Franco's victory. We can learn from this today as well as be inspired by the better-known successes of the revolution. ★

### Further Reading

Gilles Dauvé—*When Insurrections Die* (Antagonism Press, c/o BM Makhno, London WC1N 3XX, UK) No ISBN/Free

Murray Bookchin—*To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936* (AK Press) ISBN 1871376872/£4.50

Murray Bookchin—*The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years—1868-1936* (AK Press) ISBN 187317604X/£13.95

Michael Seidman—*Workers Against Work: Labour in Paris and Barcelona During the Popular Fronts* (University of California Press)

The Ex—*1936: The Spanish Revolution* (AK Press, 1997) ISBN 1-873176-01-5/£16.95



*19th July 1936. Barricades in Barcelona on the day the revolution broke out.*



# Reflections on Biocentrism

***Impressions of UK EFi  
by a Roving  
American***



**I had a bit of a weird experience at the UK Earth First! Winter Moot in January 2000. After hearing a lot of brilliant (and at times not so brilliant) discussion on topics such as social revolution, global resistance to capitalism, anarchist theory and the fine art of snogging, it struck me that I hadn't heard one word about other species aside from humans.**

I looked around to double check that I was in the right place and not at the local Socialist Workers' Party meeting, and was reassured by seeing one of your intrepid *Do or Die* editors in the room. Since I was in fact at an Earth First! activist gig, I raised my hand and made a comment about Deep Ecology and biocentrism. While a couple people nodded their heads in agreement, most returned my comment with blank stares, and one gentleman rolled his eyes at the ceiling and harrumphed, most likely because he thought I must be some kind of dinosaur to be even mentioning those pre-historic words.

Throughout the whole Moot, the only time I heard anything about other forms of life, except for indirect references to ecosystems or the biosphere, was when I chirped in with seemingly annoying relics of radical eco-theory. What a strange situation! To be at an Earth First! Gathering and to only hear human-centered discussions.

To be fair, I believe that every activist there felt a deep passion for preserving the land. And I know that in the course of their activism, those people considered and fought for their animal and plant relations. But I believe an ecological world-view needs to be integrated into every revolutionary discussion, just as a social perspective needed to be integrated into the EFi movement, an achievement that seems to have happened first in the UK and then later in the US.

Mostly what I want to express to folks in the UK is that things have changed a lot in the American and Canadian EFi movements since days of yore. Yet the following stereotype of an American EFi'er still remains in Europe: a socially conservative, regressive, dull, dogmatic, xenophobic, booze-

swilling, single-issued, rednecked wilderness freak. Moreover, Murray Bookchin and his crowd seem to have succeeded overseas in their task of painting Deep Ecology as an eco-fascist philosophy.

Indeed, many of the original proponents of Deep Ecology have dodgy perspectives on social issues, such as shutting down the border to immigrants (as if that's a solution to anything). And some of them made comments (or were misquoted) that still haunt us today, like the infamous "AIDS is a good thing" and "Africans can starve" debacles.

What inspires me about EFi nowadays where I live is that due to an influx of anarchists, native sovereigntists, squatters, Wobblies, punks, train hoppers and the like, a dimension has been added to our movement that was lacking when it was just a single issue campaign group. Critics say that EFi's uncompromising defense of Mother Earth has been watered down by "leftist politics" or the misguided kids, but I think that's a load of bollocks. The defense of wilderness and biodiversity is what matters to me the most, yet I've come to believe that one of the best ways to achieve that is to make connections with other struggles. N30 in Seattle showed this strategy come to fruition. It's painfully obvious that fighting the land-rapers in desperate rearguard battles over every single development is bound to fall in the end. Instead, we need to attack the roots of the problem (i.e. capitalism, patriarchy, racism, sky god religion, alienation from nature, etc.) which is one reason why it's important for wilderness nuts to learn about and network with other movements.

In order to explain or defend the anthropocentric (human-centered) discussions at the Moot, one mate said that "Well, what do you expect? We have



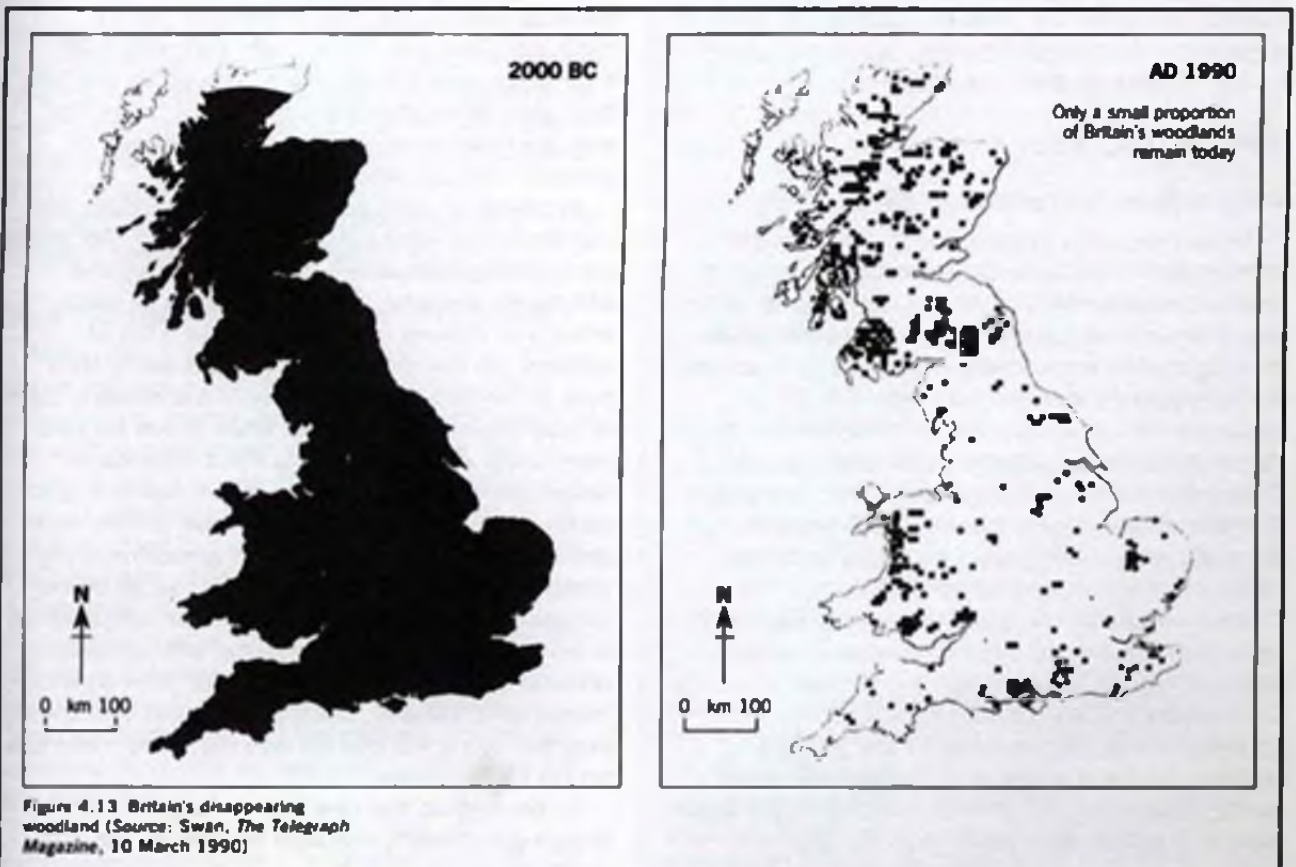
no wilderness left," while another said "Yes you're right, but EFl is really a crap name that we can't seem to get rid of." While acknowledging all that, I believe it's critical to have a biocentric-based foundation for any radical ecology movement (or whatever y'all would call yourselves, if you would give yourselves a label at all).

I'll offer two reasons for this. First off, I noticed something pretty stark when I left the urban sprawl of southern England and went straight to the ancient forests of the American West Coast, otherwise known as Cascadia: people are nicer and happier when they live in a beautiful natural environment and/or hold a connection to the land. Some EFlers in the UK may have a more spot-on political critique than some of us do, but due to the headstart your society has had in stripping the land, I've noticed that urban harshness creeps into your interactions, which I see as a detriment.

The reason I mention this is because to me, the only way at times I can find the strength to go on is to try and maintain a connection with the land through a biocentric spirituality of sorts, though one that has no relation to New Age commodity religion. Thus, even if one lives in a concrete sprawl, it will help the radical ecologist to look, feel and think beyond the detritus of syphilization and gain strength from the power of the life force we are working to defend. Maybe that sounds hokey.

But keeping that connection gives a patch of ground to take root in (in an industrial society of rootless apathy) while we fight the destruction. John Seed talks about how after a meeting with Australian aboriginals in Sydney, he noticed a man looking over the cityscape. John asked him what he was looking at, and the man replied that he could still clearly see the land as it once was under all the concrete and metal. If we are going to endure, we may have to develop a similar vision.

Secondly, it seems inherently flawed not to integrate biocentrism into a radical ecology movement, and possibly even dangerous. Dangerous in the sense that during the Spanish Civil War, one debate was whether to begin the revolution immediately (including all that entailed, such as land distribution and different work arrangements at a time when people could barely produce the food and materials they needed), or whether to focus on fighting the fascists and then sorting things out after victory. In our struggle today against the eco-fascists, if we ever do "win," it will be too easy to fall back into the patterns and habits that have brought us to the current global biological meltdown. We need to integrate an Earth-based consciousness now, we need to live the revolution now, both to have any chance of success as well as to insure that there isn't a new regime that will be as bad or worse than the old. ★





# STATE OF TERROR

*"Compared with the wholesale violence of capital and government, political acts of violence are but a drop in the ocean."*—Emma Goldman<sup>1</sup>

**The Terrorism Act 2000 received Royal Assent on 24th July 2000 and will come into effect on the UK mainland in the spring of 2001. The Act redefines 'terrorism' to include damage to property and introduces a range of tough measures designed to combat this. It is clear from the Act that direct action can now be legally classified as terrorism.**

In this article we have reports from several different countries in Europe, examining how this British legislation is mirrored across the continent. Reports come from both countries where anti-'terrorist' legislation is being newly introduced and countries where similar laws have been in place for decades, investigating how activists have responded to these attacks and what effect this legislation has had on political movements in the different countries.

But before seeing what we can learn from events elsewhere, we need to examine the new legislation, why it has been introduced and what sort of opposition there has been to it.

## THEY ACT...

### Why a New Terrorism Act?

While the peace process in Northern Ireland created the need for a re examination of existing anti-terrorist legislation, the UK's signing up to two new international conventions on terrorism made new legislation a necessity in order to incorporate the conventions into domestic law. The 1998 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism both gained near universal support internationally, having been drawn up under the auspices of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, domestic politics on the mainland were also influencing the introduction of new anti-terrorist legislation. Although it is unclear to exactly what extent the legislation was specifically aimed at the direct action movement,<sup>2</sup> the growing success of direct action was undoubtedly a major factor influencing the new law. Multinationals found that their profits were being reduced and their reputations degraded but were scared of starting civil claims for libel or trespass after seeing what a



disaster the 'McLibel' trial had been for McDonalds. Although their spin doctors were advising them to call their opponents '(eco-) terrorists', this was not enough. Following calls from police and lobbying from companies like GM food giant Monsanto the definition of 'terrorism' was re-written to include "serious damage" to property not just people.<sup>3</sup>

In calling for new powers against activists, the multinationals were certainly not alone.<sup>4</sup> The police were finding themselves hit by increasing civil liability for wrongful arrests—in cases of mass arrests at actions this could lead to a bill of millions, as Hampshire police found out to their cost at Twyford Down, the first of the modern style of road protests.<sup>5</sup> At a time when police budgets were under strain this was a most unwelcome development and as if that was not bad enough, some of this money was being used to fund more demonstrations, leading to even greater policing costs in the future. The final straw had to be the increasing number of juries who were not prepared to convict some of those charged with committing criminal damage, deciding they had done so with 'reasonable excuse', the first and most well known example being the women who damaged Hawk jets bound for Indonesia.

In drawing up the new Act, once again the British government was able to draw on its decades of experience in managing the apartheid statelet of Northern Ireland, the test laboratory of



the British police state. Over the last 30 years in Northern Ireland criminal justice has largely taken second place to crime and disorder control. The question of absolute guilt or innocence has not been asked much—what has really mattered is the question of whether you, or anyone you knew or were related to, might be involved in a suspect social group, i.e. Republican or radical. By knowing what was going on, the state has been able to stop radical activity taking place and has been able to use personal information to harass and neutralise individuals or blackmail them into becoming informers. Individuals have been driven into a state of paranoia by being made aware that the state knew their every move and that at any time they could be taken down the police station. Much of the rest of the population was instilled with a general fear that it was under surveillance, similar to that used for social control in the 'socialist' countries of Eastern Europe, and far more effective than the usual deterrence of prison.

Mainland Britain is not currently experiencing anything like what has happened in Northern Ireland, but the legacy of Thatcherism and its subsequent Blairite political consensus has led to a more divided and disordered society. It is already well known that social authoritarianism, in particular the identification and managing of the unproductive and surplus elements in capitalist societies, is as essential and is indeed just as much a part of neo-liberalism as is economic liberalisation.<sup>6</sup> Now, however, it was becoming clear that something more was needed for the new heretics that actively questioned and opposed the neo-liberal vision of progress and who contradicted the politicians' line that economic globalisation is the only possible future. In short, for this 'progress' to continue, those elements need to be excluded politically and ultimately socially.

### **New 'Terrorism' = Political Exclusion**

While the strict definition of terrorism is "the use of violence to instill fear in sections of the population to coerce others", the current usage of the word in mainstream politics is more like "a rhetorical insult whose content is determined not by any a priori academic test but rather by those wielding power in society".<sup>7</sup> It is this wider sense that has been used as the basis for the new definition of 'terrorism' in the Act, a clearly ideological attempt to stigmatise and exclude the victims of the new law and to prejudice people against them. Anyone to whom the label of 'terrorist' sticks will find themselves increasingly sidelined as others will not want to be tarred with the same brush.

By deciding that somebody is not just a suspected criminal but a suspected terrorist, the odds are stacked against them from the start.

## **TERRORISM ACT 2000 AT A GLANCE**



### **Redefinition of 'Terrorism'**

Now includes violence to people, damage to property, endangering life, threats to the health and safety of a section of the population and interference or disruption to electronic systems. Actions have to be designed to intimidate a section of the population or influence a government.

### **Proscription of Terrorist Organisations**

New offences are created of being a member of, supporting or wearing the uniform of a proscribed (banned) organisation. Any action taken for the benefit of a proscribed organisation is automatically deemed terrorist, even including speaking at a meeting at which a member of a proscribed organisation also speaks. All these offences carry a potential 10 year sentence.

### **Funding and Terrorist Property**

Covers what its title suggests but also includes an offence of failing to inform the police about terrorism if the information came to you through your work.

### **Terrorist Investigations**

Includes the power to impose cordons and to perform searches of properties. It is for the person being searched to prove that anything found is not connected to terrorism.

### **Counter Terrorist Powers**

Includes wide-ranging powers to arrest and stop and search and reduces rights on arrest. The police gain the ability to hold people for up to seven days without anyone being informed and without a lawyer for two days.

### **Miscellaneous**

Includes sections covering port and border controls and possession or collection of information. Also in this section, "directing at any level" terrorist activities carries a potential life sentence and "inciting terrorism overseas" makes it illegal to support by words armed struggle in another country.

**For more information, see the Activist's Guide to the Terrorism Act at: <http://go.to/TA2000>**

**Email: [ta2000@get.to](mailto:ta2000@get.to)**

**Check out the Act: [www.hmsa.gov.uk/acts.htm](http://www.hmsa.gov.uk/acts.htm)**

**Also see Statewatch magazine, PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW, UK. Web: [www.statewatch.org](http://www.statewatch.org)**



Magistrates will be unlikely to refuse requests for continued detention, judges will be more likely to grant requests for Public Interest Immunity (i.e. a blackout on media reporting of a case), and journalists who ask 'who, where, what, when, why?' will find the answer to their first question clouds the others, making it easier for the police to persuade them that a bottle with paint brush cleaner is really a Molotov cocktail, for example.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, most people rely on information from the media rather than everyday life in this area. One analysis of the phenomenon puts it well: "The power to name, label, and define terrorism is especially relevant... since terrorism is so distant and beyond the average person's experience. It is a case... where the media wield exceptional power over popular conceptions of reality."<sup>9</sup> And there is another factor: most people do not realise how dependent on the police the mass media has now become. Approximately 35% of TV news is now related to crime stories. To obtain the latest information on high profile crimes and to include interviews with the police so as to appear authoritative, the media has to co-operate with them and individual companies cannot afford to stop playing ball over something controversial like activists/terrorists, as they know it will make their job harder. Besides, when it comes to extreme and unusual crimes, such as terrorism, there will be a tendency to trust the police's version of events. The increasing power and influence in police forces of their public and press relations departments is beyond the scope of this article, but is also an important issue.<sup>10</sup>



## WE RE-ACT...

So if it is clear then that the Terrorism Act represents at least to an extent an attack on the direct action movement, how then do we avoid this two-pronged ideological and legal attack? If the government is trying to put increasing pressure on us to try and split us and to isolate and stigmatise

the radicals as 'terrorists' so they can be more easily repressed, how do we respond?

## We Fought the Law and the Law Won

Despite some lacklustre attempts from the end of last year to start a campaign, no concerted effort to challenge the new legislation ever really got off the ground. This is understandable in a way, as campaigns of this sort rarely seem to get anywhere. The campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill/Act (CJB/A) of 1994 helped to kickstart the whole direct action movement of the 1990s and to bring together a whole lot of different subcultures from ravers to hunt sabs in opposition to the prospective Act. Networks and groups formed all over the country in opposition to the Bill and there were big demos through the centre of London, at least one of which ended in a riot. It didn't stop the CJA, but it did build a bigger more united movement prepared to defy it than had existed beforehand. We turned the government's own legislation to our advantage, but still we never really stood a chance of actually stopping its passage through parliament.

Many of the more liberal elements involved in the anti-CJA campaign seriously believed that we could stop the Bill becoming an Act.<sup>11</sup> This was largely because to them the Bill seemed such an irrational act of pure prejudice that they thought simply demonstrating that despite our funny looking hair we were really a nice bunch of people would be enough to persuade the government to drop the legislation. Surely, after being shown how thoroughly harmless and generally nice we are the government couldn't still want to ban our parties and squats and protests and convoys? Unfortunately they did, at which some of the 'fluffies' considered the campaign lost. In the interests of anti-CJB propaganda they had painted the introduction of the Act as such a doomsday scenario ('If they pass this law, life as we know it will end' etc.) that all their hopes had been fixed on stopping it becoming law. For others, the passing of the Bill was pretty much a foregone conclusion and marked only the beginning of the campaign to defy the Act and make it unworkable.

The direct action movement was reasonably successful in defying the Act and keeping on keeping on despite it. The Act hit some things harder than it hit others, many parts of it have never really been used as existing legislation served the state just as well, other parts have had a large effect. Parts of the Act served merely to legitimise what the police were already doing and parts of it gave them new powers they have not yet used.

The CJA was easy to mobilise against in some respects because it was so obviously a simple rag-bag of Tory prejudices—one Bill to simultaneously





## THE A30 'ACTION'

*The A30 event, held on April 30th 2000, was a big photo call where everyone would 'dress for direct action' and get their photo taken all together to make some point about 'the diversity of our movement' or something. The organisers insisted it was not a media stunt and that the photo was primarily for our use rather than that of the media, which made little or no sense to anyone except themselves and was rather undermined by the fact that the only place the photo ever seems to have appeared was on the front page of The Guardian. The A30 thing was like one of those ideas for an action you have down the pub when you're pissed and think would be a great idea—"yeah, we can all dress up like off the front of the Sgt. Pepper album and get our photo taken..."—but then you wake up in the morning and realise that the action would have no point to it. The organisers of the A30 event seemed to have forgotten to sober up and succeeded in organising an 'action' with almost no point at all.*

hit football fans, new age travellers, squatters, hunt sabs, road protesters and ravers. It was specifically aimed at current youth subculture to the extent of even outlawing specific forms of music ("music characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats"). The Terrorism Bill is clear in its intention to include forms of direct action under the rubric of 'terrorism' but it is in no way so clearly and exclusively aimed at us as the CJA was. It is thus correspondingly harder to mobilise against. In 1994 we were clearly all lumped together in their minds and we thus became more of a collective force in practice.

That was several years ago now and we generally consider ourselves to have moved on a great deal since then. However, some old hands had a definite feeling of déjà vu as the abortive campaign against the Terrorism Bill seemed set on re-enacting 1994 all over again.

## "The First Time as Tragedy, the Second as Farce"

Why is it when faced with potentially severe repression we go all fucking liberal? You might expect that a harsh attack on us would meet with an appropriate response, but no—the immediate reaction of a lot of people seemed to be to set out

to prove to 'public opinion' that we're not really terrorists at all, we're all jolly nice people. Nothing wrong with that you might say, and indeed no, except as a strategy to defeat the Terrorism Act it is doomed to failure. We always talk about how much we've moved on in the last 5 or 6 years, so why then did the Terrorism Bill make people revert back to the worst days of the Freedom Network and stage a totally pointless media stunt as the biggest single national 'action' against the Terrorism Bill? (See above.)

And still at the end of the day it didn't persuade any more people that we weren't terrorists than if we had adopted any other tactic. If there had been a re-run of the anti-CJA Hyde Park riot of 1994, people might at least have realised that we had something to be angry about and we might even have gained a bit more sympathy than by trying to come across as harmless and respectable as possible.

The whole thing is a flawed strategy—it means the harsher they repress you and the worse names they call you the more inoffensive you have to act. They pick on soft targets: simply demonstrating to everyone how much of a soft target you are is unlikely to get you anywhere. The problem is that we feel forced to respond to their attacks on their terms. They attempt to nail us with a media PR





strategy and so we feel forced to respond on those terms and to project a rival media PR image, which is something we have generally moved away from in recent years after being fucked over by the media so many times, not only by bad publicity but by trivialising 'good' publicity as well ('no publicity is good publicity' we might say).

## War of the Image

So we are forced on to the terrain of the media, of trying to manage our own representation, which inevitably leads us into watering down the politics, claiming that we're only here to enliven and enrich British democracy, that our right to peaceful protest has been taken away and so on. Maybe it would be better not to respond on their chosen terrain at all, but to respond in other ways that we are better at. Let's face it—they are very good at the media thing and we're not, and a media PR war is one we can never win because they OWN the media. It actually fits into their strategy of repression to try and get us to play their media game running round trying to 'raise awareness', because people with more liberal politics will agree to play and will end up having to be more and more liberal to stay in the game. They will eventually be obliged to actually or effectively distance themselves from the more radical elements that will generally refuse to participate in the battle for 'public opinion'.

Playing to the media agenda of what is considered to be respectable behaviour and what is considered 'terrorism' is also unlikely to win you much 'public' support either. Any support that means anything is given out of some realisation of direct connection or solidarity. A simple appeal to conscience is unlikely to win much support. Attempts to prove to people that everyone was under threat and that, once the Bill was passed almost anyone would be classed as a terrorist did not make much of an impression because it was completely obvious to everyone that this was not the case. The new law doesn't concern most people in an immediate way. Most people know they are not under attack and strenuously proclaiming the opposite doesn't change anything but merely convinces people that you are as mad

as the government is claiming you are. The Act might technically cover all sorts of activities that it would never in practice be used against. People competed with each other to think up the most 'normal' and inoffensive thing that could technically be covered by the legislation no matter how unlikely it was that the law would ever actually be used against this.

## Lay Down the Law

There seems to be something in the nature of campaigns against pieces of legislation that leads otherwise radical movements into the trap of believing in the ideology of law. For example, some people have suggested the new Act might open up the possibility of prosecuting states or large companies for 'terrorism'—which is unlikely to succeed to say the least! Even as an exercise in demonstrating 'who are the real terrorists' this position misses the point. What the law says on a piece of paper matters only to a certain extent; if it becomes necessary to bend, break or ignore those words then that is what will be done.

Trying to prosecute the government under its own laws forgets that the whole state apparatus, legal system, parliament, courts, executive and all is merely "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" as some hot-headed young radical once said, and these elements are not really separate or independent entities that can be played off against each other in that way.

Campaigning against specific pieces of legislation, like conducting a war for 'public opinion', forces us on to their territory. Law is ideology—the whole edifice of law and justice is part of the ideological mask of capital. At the end of the day, to use a hackneyed phrase, 'All power comes from the barrel of a gun'. This is why international law is such a joke and the people who believe in it are even bigger jokers—unless there is a power (with guns) to enforce the law then the law is a dead letter. The USA effectively ignores any international laws it chooses to. What really matters therefore is POWER—both actual and potential power (e.g. the potential threat of trouble keeps the government from doing certain things)—and the balance of forces currently existing in society, not what is written on pieces of paper. Admittedly, this paper serves the practical function of augmenting their power, but to see only the law and not the balance of power that lies behind it is blind. Does this law come from a position of strength or of weakness? Is it their response to an assertion of our power or a product of our weakness? Are there other factors at work? Do they have the power to enforce the law? All these questions are forgotten if we see only what is written on pieces of paper.



So what really matters more than them calling us terrorists is where the resources go. They can call us terrorists all they like and it doesn't make that much difference. If however, they allocate extra resources to us or decide to put MI5 on our case in a big way, whether or not they are simultaneously calling us terrorists, that's what will make a big difference.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the pessimism of much of this article, the state will not use the new Act against activists straight away. There is no reason to assume the usage and implementation of the Terrorism Act will not be as patchy as has been the case with the CJA; most likely bits of it will have an effect whereas others we will never hear of again. Predicting which bits of the legislation will actually affect us is a tricky business. In the meantime the state and the media will try to recast radicals as terrorists so as to ensure public acceptance of any draconian measures eventually taken against us. Of course it will be crucial to educate ourselves and others at risk from the powers in the Act.<sup>12</sup> It is important to emphasise that if the Northern Ireland experience is anything to go by, very few will be charged and even fewer convicted of the offences contained in the Act.

Nevertheless, we need to consider how we respond to this sort of attack given the self-proclaimed strategy of "long-term attrition" launched against us.<sup>13</sup> Should we attempt to start up separate campaigns against new legislation like the Terrorism Act or do we just carry on doing what we were doing anyway?

### Going Underground...

Our two central concerns have got to be both that we need to survive, stay out of jail and carry on taking action and also to make sure we avoid the stigmatisation and isolation of being labelled 'terrorists'. On the first count: If we carry on doing what we do and we carry on doing it better then obviously they will pass laws against us—it is to be expected. If we cannot stop them doing this then we need to learn to survive despite what they might throw at us. This is the purpose of looking at similar legislation that has been introduced in other places at various times and how that worked, what effect it had and how people worked around it. This last point being the most important, because this new law is not the end of the world and it's not going to stop people doing things, but it might possibly change what we do and how we do it. So by looking at other countries we can learn what we might now have to do.

One possible response to 'anti-terrorist' repression was expressed well by The Red Army Faction (RAF) in the 1970s:

"In our original concept, we planned to combine urban guerrilla activity with grass-roots work. What we wanted was for each of us to work simultaneously within existing socialist groups at the workplace and in local districts, helping to influence the discussion process, learning, gaining experience. It has become clear that this cannot be done. These groups are under such close surveillance by the political police, their meetings, timetables and the content of their discussions so well monitored, that it is impossible to attend without being put under surveillance oneself. We have learned that individuals cannot combine legal and illegal activity."<sup>14</sup>

While this is true to a certain extent, in the UK today we are not in the same situation as the RAF were in Germany in the 70s and we might be unwise to cut ourselves off unnecessarily from all mass struggle as they did. In fact, doing the exact opposite might be a better survival strategy.

Given the differences in the two situations it is entirely possible that we can carry on doing both more covert and more open political work at the

## "SO YOU THINK YOU'RE A TERRORIST?"

"This is the latest trendy issue in Brighton. Last year it was genetix, now that's been forgotten. Benefit gigs are being organised 'against the Terrorism Bill'. Where is the benefit money going?—to organise more events like this to 'raise awareness'. Raising money to put on your favourite bands—nice one! Or the rumour is to hire a double decker bus and drive round London 'raising awareness'. The anti-Terrorism Bill rag week—men dressed as St. Trinians' girls in a tub of baked beans—nice stunt! Some people think it's like the CJA—'it's taking away my right to party, man' said one gig goer. A squat was organised to 'raise awareness'—only people already in the know went there. Suddenly everyone wanted to be a terrorist, for the kudos of it. How exciting—you could tell your parents during the holidays you were a threat to the state. People who had never done anything were running around organising meetings. People who hadn't even been arrested under the CJA were wetting themselves that they would be the first to be targeted when the Bill becomes law. Anyone who was anyone on the 'Brighton scene' would surely be a terrorist they said as they argued into the night."

**Taken from the "100% Bitter" Brighton FIN.  
Get a free copy from: PO Box 2786, Brighton,  
East Sussex BN2 2AX, UK.**



same time. Repression can force groups to become more insular and paranoid, not trusting anyone, becoming ever more secretive as they disappear 'underground'. This is a danger we should try and avoid while also avoiding being frightened into inactivity.

And as for avoiding being stuck with the label of 'terrorists': we need to recognise that this is a real danger but that hopeless liberal appeals to 'public opinion' are not necessarily any solution to it. In this country, we have, over the last decade, whether we like it or not, benefitted greatly from an underlying level of public support for direct action. From the road protests to anti-genetics actions, we have been protected from the more severe repression experienced by activists in other countries by this tacit public approval. We might often be scathing about this mainstream support but it has in many ways been a great advantage to us and it is something we should not take for granted. If we lose this public support we will quite probably end up going deeper underground, becoming more isolated from the mainstream of society and spending longer amounts of time in prison.

Ironically, by just getting on with stopping roads being built, stopping genetic engineering or whatever, we're actually more likely to develop real links with people and to develop some genuine solidarity that might help counter-act the stigmatisation of being labelled terrorists than we are through hyperbolic campaigns against specific pieces of legislation. We need to learn from the experience of fighting the CJA without simply repeating it—trying to persuade people how nice you are doesn't work—defiance does. We can use the law to mobilise and build a stronger resistance but we shouldn't focus on that one piece of legislation; we should focus beyond it.★

## Notes

- 1) From 'The Psychology of Political Violence' in *Anarchism & Other Essays* (1910). On a more modern note check out Chomsky's writings on the subject, such as *The Culture of Terrorism* (1988) and *Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World* (1986).
- 2) Some activists who have claimed the whole thing was cooked up entirely to attack us seem to be overstating the case a little. The Act certainly doesn't seem to be a response to any particular escalation of activity on our part (it was in process before J18). Its timing would rather suggest that it had relatively little to do with us and rather more to do with Northern Ireland and the international situation. For example, the main supporters of 'terrorism' in foreign states that the government has been having problems with have been radical Muslims based in the UK, using it as a base from which to attack oil-rich British allies in the Gulf, causing much diplomatic embarrassment for the British government. The Egyptian dictatorship under Hosni Mubarak has openly gloated about its role in securing the new legislation. However, the version of the Prevention of Terrorism Act currently in force already covers international terrorism. The new Act adds extra powers to this, like the prescription of terrorist organisations and extends financial controls. But, the really new thing in the Act—the parts which extend the term 'terrorism' to cover property damage,

seem to be much more clearly aimed at the direct action movement. The government consultation paper that led to the new law stated that among its targets were 'animal rights and to a lesser extent environmental activists... and... [their] persistent, and destructive campaigns'. (Do or Die No. 8, p.294)

- 3) 'Get Off My Back, Jack', *The Big Issue*, July 31st 2000, p.7
- 4) See 'Legislation against Terrorism: An Analysis of the Responses to the Government's Consultation Paper (Cm 4178)'—[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/olcd/terrap.htm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/olcd/terrap.htm) Unfortunately some of those responding preferred to remain anonymous...
- 5) The new power in Section 41 of the Act to arrest anyone suspected of being a terrorist is likely to be used at radical demonstrations. Professor Clive Walker, who is writing the authoritative book on the new Act, notes in an as yet unpublished article in the *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* that the equivalent power in previous legislation was used to mass arrest the Kurds who occupied the Greek Embassy in London in early 1998.
- 6) An excellent example of the new penology is the proposed computer system being developed for the UK that will aid sentencing of criminals by providing a risk assessment based on factors such as previous offences, age and postcode. This marks a fundamental shift from imprisoning people for what they have done or so as to try to teach them not to reoffend, towards imprisoning people for what they might do in the future. Instead of being people they are simply figures in an actuarial calculation of risk and fodder for the industrial corrections complex to grow fat on.
- 7) Primoratz—'What is Terrorism?' in *Terrorism*, ed. Connor Gearty, a book well worth reading for anyone interested in the subject.
- 8) See the excellent article written by Paul Rosenberg for Indymedia, 'The Empire Strikes Back: Police Repression of Protest from Seattle to L.A.', available at: [http://ia.indymedia.org/images/empire\\_strikes.pdf](http://ia.indymedia.org/images/empire_strikes.pdf)
- 9) Fannon—'Terrorism and the Mass Media: A Systemic Analysis of a Symbiotic Process' p.103 in *Terrorism Op. Cit.*
- 10) This tendency is being exported. See 'Riots Threaten Prague Autumn' in *The Guardian* on 24th August 2000, which revealed that Scotland Yard was sending one of its experts in 'media management' to Prague for the S26 protest.
- 11) To refer to someone or to some form of action as 'liberal', is not to say anything about his or her level of militancy, about whether or not they are 'up for it' or not. Liberalism is the political ideology of capitalism—the set of ideas that go hand in hand with capitalism. It is a political rendering of the relations of the marketplace and takes for granted the artificial separation and individualised competition of the market as being the natural condition of human life. In the market it appears that everyone is equal as individuals to buy and sell and to interact through this exchange. This 'equality' ideologically obscures capitalist exploitation, because not all buyers and sellers are equal. Therefore, liberalism does not recognise the existence of classes and assumes all human beings to share the same common set of interests. Believing in democracy, the law, our 'rights' as members of civil society, that we are all just individuals... are all attitudes characteristic of liberalism.
- 12) Bust cards and other information will be on the TA2000 website well before the Act comes into force.
- 13) 'Executive Summary', *Carnival Against Global Capitalism: 18th June 1999* (City of London police report)
- 14) Red Army Faction—'The Concept of the Urban Guerrilla' (April 1971) in *Televisionaries: The Red Army Faction Story 1963-1993* by Tom Vague (AK Press, 1994), pp.26-30



'You're a terrorist? Thank God. I understood Meg to say you were a theorist.'



# NORTHERN IRELAND

Bringing it all Back Home: Anti-'Terrorism' from the 70s to Today



*British troops in Northern Ireland, 1972*

***"Some of the tactics adopted by the London police and later by other forces were those developed and used by the army and the RUC Special Patrol Group in Northern Ireland. The introduction of 'snatch squads' and 'wedges' in demonstrations, and random stop and searches and roadblocks on the streets were based on the army's experience in Ulster"—Robert Mark, former Metropolitan Police Commissioner.***

If people in Britain have been slow to learn the lessons of Ireland, the same cannot be said for our rulers. They have used the North as a laboratory for social control, where methods of repression can be tested before being tried out on the rest of us. This is not a new phenomenon. As long ago as 1883, the police Special Branch (originally called the Special Irish Branch) was set up to deal with Irish rebels. Before long they were being used against any radical opposition in Britain and Ireland, so that by 1978 Merlyn Rees (Labour Home Secretary) could accurately say: "The Special Branch collects information on those whom I think cause problems for the state"—a lot of people!

Plastic bullets, CS gas, riot shields, armoured personnel carriers, water cannons and roadblocks have all been piloted first in the six counties before being imported to the British mainland. And the new Terrorism Act is no exception—what was

originally temporary emergency legislation to deal with 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland is now being made permanent and being extended to cover a wider range of people.

## **The Original Prevention of Terrorism Act**

***"You're innocent until proven Irish"—woman arrested under the PTA.***

The new Terrorism Act will replace both the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the 1973 Northern Ireland Act. These two acts have led to some of the worst human rights abuses in this country over the last 25 years, imprisoned innocent people and led to the unnecessary detention of thousands of mainly Irish people. The original PTA was introduced by the Labour Party in 1974 on the basis that it was a short-term emergency measure. Funnily enough, successive governments have seemed rather reluctant to get rid of the law once it was in place.





*Could this be EFL in a couple of years time?*

Less than 7% of the 5,000 people nicked under the first 7 years of the law were even charged, let alone convicted of anything, although many were detained for days. In 1995 (during the IRA cease-fire) 22,691 mainly Irish people were stopped and searched for up to one hour. In fact, 98% of all those detained under the PTA were innocent of any crime. The law was clearly being used more to intimidate and monitor the general Irish population in the UK than arrest terrorists. The first person to be charged and subsequently convicted under the PTA was Paul Hill of the Guildford Four, who was wrongly jailed for a bombing and imprisoned for 15 years. As that case and the case of the Birmingham Six demonstrate, being Irish in the wrong place and at the wrong time is a major crime in British courts.

Every year 50,000 Irish people are stopped and questioned at British ports under the PTA. Many have been excluded from Britain without even being charged. The PTA has also been used to prevent Irish Republicans from speaking in Britain—in 1982, Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were both banned from entering Britain to speak. The Act has also been used to remove prominent opposition figures during 'difficult' times for the government—the week before the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands, 30 leading Republicans were arrested under the PTA, subject to 'extended detentions', and then released without charge.

Here's one example of the ordinary everyday use of the PTA:

Bernard O'Connor, a teacher from Enniskillen, was arrested under the PTA in 1977. His first interrogation session in Belfast lasted for over 3 hours. He was forced to stand on his toes, bend his knees and hold his hands out in front of him and he was hit in the face when his heels touched the ground or he lost balance. Every time he denied taking part in bombings and shootings he was hit again. That afternoon, three detectives

tried to get him to admit to lesser charges to avoid 35 years in jail. Then at night the brutality really started. He was stripped naked, beaten up and forced to do press-ups continually. His underpants were placed over his head and he was threatened with being choked, then with being handed over to the death squads of the Ulster Volunteer Force. These interrogations continued until he was released without charge on Monday night.

Despite what the government said at the time, the original PTA was not intended to convict people or to prevent bombings. It was intended to prevent the Irish community in Britain from expressing support for a united Ireland. This new Terrorism Act will likely be used in a similar way—they will use the stop and search powers in the new Act for 'dragnet' low-level intelligence gathering exercises and general intimidation and harassment. Leon Brittan, the former Home Secretary, said as much of the old PTA in 1985: "The object of the exercise is not just to secure convictions but to secure information".

The other primary aim of the legislation was clear. Terrorise the non-political population—mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers, teenage boys and girls—and you destabilise and marginalise the political movement, because 'ordinary' people will distance themselves from the politicians, or worse, they will betray friends they think are involved. The British state will tell you this is not the object of the legislation, but it is and so it will be again. In this age of electronic surveillance and Cold War-like observation, the forces of the British Crown are able to identify those they know are involved in anti-state activity, whether violent or non-violent. This produces two effects: the political people become paranoid, the non-political people become scared. The political people, in the eyes of the non-political people, are shunned and stereotyped. It took 30 years for this to happen in Ireland and now it has. Anyone who is associated with the Republican movement is a terrorist. No matter what they do, they are never able to shake off this image or stereotype.

### **Who are the 'Real' Terrorists?**

The ignorance prevailing about Northern Ireland amongst most of the population of mainland Britain, and even amongst many political radicals, demonstrates how well the British state has succeeded in isolating and demonising Republicans and radicals in Northern Ireland. It is vital that we know the history of what has gone on in Northern Ireland over the last 30 years. Especially today when new anti-'terrorist' legislation is casting the net ever wider, it is important that we learn what the British state is capable of and how it operates. It is also important that we do not

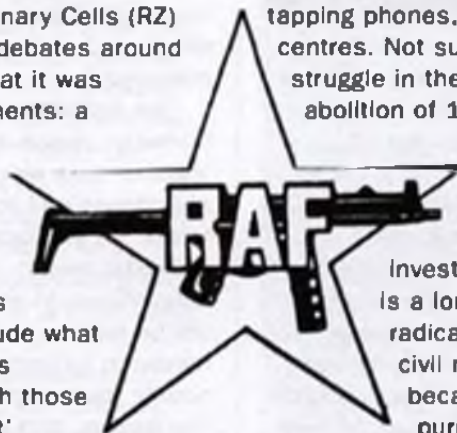


fall into the trap of bemoaning how we are lumped together with 'real' terrorists and start demanding better laws to catch the 'real' terrorists while leaving us alone. Even this brief look at the history of the original PTA shows what sort of 'real terrorists' were the majority of its victims. Still, some people would no doubt say, things are different in Ireland. After all, isn't all this repression simply a response to the bullets and bombs of the IRA? NO! In fact the tactics used by working class Catholics in the early phases of the present 'troubles' were remarkably similar to those used by activists and protesters in mainland Britain today. It was the vicious repression of the early civil rights movement of 68/69 that led to an escalation of struggle and eventually to the pre-meditated massacre of Bloody Sunday when British troops shot and killed unarmed demonstrators in Derry in 1971. ★

**For more information see: 'From Bloody Sunday to Trafalgar Square', available at:**  
[www.geocities.com/pract\\_history](http://www.geocities.com/pract_history)

## GERMANY

Whilst political repression in Germany is of course not confined to anti-terrorism laws, Section 129a is a key instrument used in the harsh repression of radical groups. Passed in 1976 as a response to the various armed groups active at that time—the Red Army Faction (RAF), the 2nd of June Movement and the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) among others, the parliamentary debates around its introduction already showed that it was directed against all radical movements: a conservative MP thus demanded an end to the "poisonous class struggle propaganda at our schools and universities". 129a deals with the formation of terrorist organisations and defines 'terrorism' broadly enough to include what would here normally be classed as criminal damage. It also deals with those "canvassing support" for 'terrorist' groups—an extremely vague concept that has ever since perfectly suited the intention of potentially criminalising all radical opposition. In legal terms, it is crucial that through the concept of membership of a terrorist organisation, individuals can be held responsible for violations of the law they have not personally committed. This had devastating consequences, especially in a number of trials against supposed members of the RAF.



Legal details based on 129a also substantially worsened procedures in court and the treatment of militants in prison.

The remit of 129a was always very wide and extended to include large sections of the radical left—so much so that even state security experts criticised it for lumping together completely different sorts of political groups with the effect of welding together 'proper terrorists' and rather harmless activists! In its 25 years of existence, thousands and thousands of investigations were started under 129a against a wide range of social movements: squatters, anti-fascists, anti-militarists, those fighting nuclear power stations and so on. A large number of investigations were related to solidarity activities for imprisoned militants from the RAF and the anti-imperialist resistance. Organising a public discussion on their prison conditions, printing hunger strike communiqués or demanding they be granted the status of political prisoners all became the crime of "supporting terrorism". In fact, of the 3,000 investigations from 1980-88, almost 90% referred to support, not membership, of a terrorist organisation. This sometimes took on comical, though serious, dimensions: making a demand that was also advanced by a 'terrorist' group was sufficient to be found guilty of supporting 'terrorism'. The conditions of public political discussion were substantially affected by the almost permanent legal hassle the radical press faced when dealing with militant actions, prison, hunger strikes and so on. Only 3% of all investigations in the 1990s led to convictions—in other words, 129a was simply used to get a better picture of political scenes and intimidate them by tapping phones, raiding flats and offices or social centres. Not surprisingly, the demise of armed struggle in the early 1990s never led to the abolition of 129a.

Resistance to criminalisation has consisted mainly of solidarity with those in prison, facing trial or being subject to investigation. The demand to scrap 129a is a long-standing one, made not only by radicals but also by liberal lawyers and civil rights groups. But precisely because 129a serves so well for the purposes of hassling people who have got nothing to do with 'terrorism', the state is not inclined to dispense with it. What is more, anti-terrorism legislation is currently being standardised throughout the European Union—the issue cannot be addressed any longer just on a national level.

Currently, the German state apparatus is hunting down supposed former members of the Revolutionary Cells. Whilst the bomb attacks in which the RZ activists allegedly participated took



place so long ago that they cannot be prosecuted for them, the same thing does not apply to their alleged membership of the RZ, for which they can still be brought to trial 15 or 20 years later: 129a once again serves its purpose.★

*(See Prisoners of War section for more information on this case.)*

# FINLAND



The upsurge of illegal direct action in Finland in recent years has caught the exploitation industries off guard and helped to create a new culture of political activism. However, this new wave of sabotage and civil disobedience also caught a lot of flak in the changing political climate in Finland. During the 90s we have seen the political spectrum shift to the right, and the politicians' rhetoric and policies have become increasingly harsh. The activist community has been the perfect target to try out these new policies. Now it seems that these new attitudes will be solidified into laws.

The public reaction to the new forms of activism has been very hostile. In newspaper editorials animal rights activists have been compared to Hell's Angels, Satan worshippers, Nazis and drug dealers. In parliament, some representatives have demanded removing social security benefits from activists, banning their newsletters and increasing their sentences. In addition to the media and the politicians, one other main proponent of this demonisation of activists has been SUPO, the

state security police. According to SUPO, animal rights activists are one of the main threats to state security nowadays. These claims, plus the influence of the European Union, led to the formation of JOUHA, the specialist riot police force that has been practising on us 'carrot-biters' especially at fur auction demos. In addition to this, the 'regular' police have pushed their powers to the limit by banning leafletting in front of shops, conducting illegal searches and confiscations after major sabotage actions and holding activists in custody for longer and longer periods.<sup>1</sup> For activists in the UK or USA this may not sound too alarming. But these steps are a big change in Finland, and go against traditionally very wide rights of protest, opinion and gathering.

The problem for the state and the relief for activists has been that the current laws are not up to these new developments. Many Finnish laws that have been applied to squatting, demonstrations, occupations and liberation raids are so old that they still refer to the Russian Emperor! Thus the police and the courts have been able to come up with 'interesting' charges and sentences. However, until now, nearly all of these hard sentences have been revoked or lessened in higher courts. Thus the recent drive for modernising the law and formalising recent police practices into law.

This February the new criminal code was discussed in parliament, and the results seem grim. The object of the new code sounds nice enough: we need coherent legislation to deal with several issues, such as breach of the peace. Thus far there has been only one law; a law against the breach of domestic peace, that has been applied very widely. Now a new law against trespass on private property and covert surveillance is being prepared.<sup>2</sup>

The definitions of illegal trespass and breach of domestic peace have both been widened so that together they now cover corporate offices, abandoned buildings, production facilities (fur farms, for example, would now be considered domestic areas), and public institutions such as dole offices. In addition to this the punishments will be harder. In effect this new law will make it harder to organise anti-corporate demonstrations, squats, demos at parliament, occupations of public institutions, and even old-fashioned strikes. (The Finnish labour movement hasn't even bothered to notice the new legislation.) Jail sentences will become more common: even an attempted fur farm raid would automatically amount to 2-3 years in jail. This might not sound so bad if you are used to 5-15 years sentences, but so far in Finland we have had NO prisoners from liberation or sabotage actions, even though many people have been prosecuted.



The new 'Law on Criminal Organisations' is one of the blessings of EU-membership, and has been easy to feed to the Finnish public. Officially the law is meant to be used to combat drug trafficking, violent crime, counterfeiting, etc. But since the definition of the law—three or more people planning and committing crimes that could amount to at least 4 years in jail—is so wide, it would also cover sabotage actions and 'organising' riots such as the Black and Green Days a few years ago. Also supporters' groups might be targeted.

Time will tell when we get our first Gandalf trials.★

## Notes

- 1) One such search was carried out in December 1997 at the offices of *Muutoksen kevät* after the shooting and wounding of activists at a fur farm in Orimattila. The police have been charged with breaches of police powers and many other counts, but the case has currently ground to a halt.
- 2) Covering offences such as activists secretly filming fur farms, for example.

*This piece was based on articles published in the excellent (Finnish-language) eco-revolutionary magazine Muutoksen kevät. For more information contact:*

*Muutoksen kevät, PL 847, 33101 Tampere, Finland.*

*Email: [mkevat@kulma.net](mailto:mkevat@kulma.net)*

*Web: [www.kulma.net/mkevat](http://www.kulma.net/mkevat)*

# HOOIGANS K.O.ED?

On July 28th 2000 the new Football (Disorder) Act received Royal Assent, making it from draft to law in less than three weeks. The 'emergency' legislation was drafted in response to English fans' behaviour during the Euro 2000 championship in June. The bill was rushed through the Commons and Lords in time for it to become law before the next English away game in Paris in September.

Germany and the Netherlands have both recently introduced similar anti-hooligan legislation that can also be used against activists. As in Britain these laws were rushed through using Euro 2000 as an excuse. In Germany, the anti-hooligan law was used to stop some people getting to the protests in Prague by taking away passports for the duration of the protests. In the Netherlands, two existing laws were amended. The definition of 'leader' of a criminal organisation has been changed so that you are now a 'leader' if you show any initiative. 'Leaders' of a criminal organisation get a third more punishment. In addition, the potential four and a half year prison sentence for 'committing violence against property or persons' now also applies to anyone who has made any 'significant contribution' to the violence. This can mean to go deliberately to a place where violence

will be used, to 'call for or organise' violence, or even giving assistance to so-called 'riot tourists' by, for example, giving them food.

Among the powers arrayed against British football fans in the new Football (Disorder) Act are new banning orders stopping you going to football matches for up to a maximum of 10 years. You can be banned for up to 3 years without ever having been found guilty of anything. Magistrates can issue these banning orders forcing people to surrender their passports if a police officer believes the subject may have at any time or in any place contributed to any "violence or disorder", whether football-related or not. "Violence" includes threatening and abusive behaviour, even "displaying any writing" considered to be threatening or abusive.

Judging from the laws in Germany and the Netherlands, there is the possibility that this legislation or adapted pieces of it could be used against activists. The precedent has now been set for the criminalisation and restriction of people who may contribute to disorder in another country. We may not think we have much in common with football hooligans, but that's not necessarily the case... For example, the job of the police Public Order Intelligence Unit (POIU) is to monitor both direct action protesters and football hooligans. Once someone asked one of the POIU team why they lumped us together like that and the cop pointed out that from their point of view we're very similar to football hooligans—we organise in a

## THE SPANISH STATE

Activists in the Spanish state could also be feeling the heat of new anti-terrorist legislation. The Spanish Cabinet agreed in September 2000 to 'toughen up' anti-terrorist laws. Primarily the laws are aimed at the armed Basque group ETA but they could easily be used against other protest movements. The draft reforms, which still need to go through the Spanish parliament, include things like making it a criminal offence to praise or publicly justify 'terrorist' acts, redefining 'terrorism' to include certain acts of arson and allowing for youths accused of 'terrorist' acts to be tried in adult courts. This new proposed legislation seems very similar to the British Terrorism Act, and it could be an indication of other European Union countries following a similar route. A few years ago an eco-activist from the Basque Country was arrested on terrorist charges relating to his environmental campaigning—we have to assume that any new anti-terrorist laws will similarly be used against animal and earth liberation activists in the Spanish state.



loose decentralised network of friends and travel around in groups, meeting up with other groups in order to cause trouble and smash things up all over the country and abroad. When put like that, you have to admit the cop had a point...★

Source: *Statewatch*, Vol. 10, No. 3/4 June 2000.  
*Statewatch*, PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW, UK.

Email: [office@statewatch.org](mailto:office@statewatch.org)

Web: [www.statewatch.org](http://www.statewatch.org)

## ITALY

In Italy on May 31st 2000, a trial that had gone on for four years in which 68 anarchists were accused of being members of an armed band called the ORAI (*Organizzazione Rivoluzionaria Anarchica Insurrezionalista*), ended in each of accused being pronounced not guilty on that charge, because there was 'no case to be answered'. The infamous armed gang, the so-called ORAI, whose members were said to be capable of anything from kidnapping to murder in order to finance their presses and clandestine activity all over Italy, has been pronounced non-existent by the very authorities that invented it.



Leader of the Christian Democrat party and five times Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro was kidnapped by the Red Brigades in 1978 and held for nearly two months. Eventually he was shot and placed in the boot of a car which was left in the centre of Rome.

Four years of often twice or thrice weekly sessions, during which public prosecutor Antonio Marini stage-managed 'repentant terrorist' Namsetchi (who it must be said gave an abysmal performance), then choreographed a supporting chorus of about 300 prosecution witnesses, for the most part cops and narks, intent on demonstrating the existence of the two-tiered organisation of his nightmares.

In Italy special 'anti-terrorist' laws have given the police virtually unlimited powers. These laws were passed in the 70s in response to a situation of massive social and political unrest. In fact their objective was not only to hit a few armed groups but also to strike a blow against the extensive social struggles which had followed the beginning of the restructuring of industry in the 70s. The main aim of these laws was to legalise police violence, which of course was already routinely exercised, and to speed up penal procedures. The law that is most frequently used to frame political groups is 'Article 270-bis' ('armed bands and subversive association'). When the 'terrorist emergency' that justified this special legislation ceased in the 1980s, this law was kept alive with the excuse of fighting mafia crimes. Both mafia and political crimes became legally defined as 'crimes of association'—that is, 'crimes committed by organised groups'. According to Article 270-bis it is not necessary to prove that defendants have personally committed a crime in order to send them down for 'subversive association'; it is enough that they have founded or taken part in an organised group that is considered 'subversive'. This law also allows the police to carry out home searches on 'suspected' people and to keep them under arrest without trial for months (which is not possible in the case of 'common' crimes). Often it is enough simply to be in a solidarity group for political prisoners to be investigated or harassed.

The technique of using 'repentant' members of organisations comes from the supergrass strategy first used by the British government in an attempt to break the IRA. It was imported by the Italian legal system at the end of the 70s and used against Leninist clandestine organisations such as the Red Brigades by prosecutors like Marini. In Genoa, four Red Brigades militants were shot dead in their beds as a result of information from a *pentito* ('repentant'). At that time a state of emergency had been declared, prison sentences were multiplied by three and carried the aggravated charge of 'terrorism', so you had people doing twenty years for simply handing out a leaflet or saying 'Viva le Brigate Rosse'. Of course, the Red Brigades were a highly structured, armed clandestine organisation. When arrested, their militants raised a clenched fist and declared themselves political prisoners. Some are still in



prison nearly a quarter of a century later for not having unclenched that fist to shake hands with the enemy.

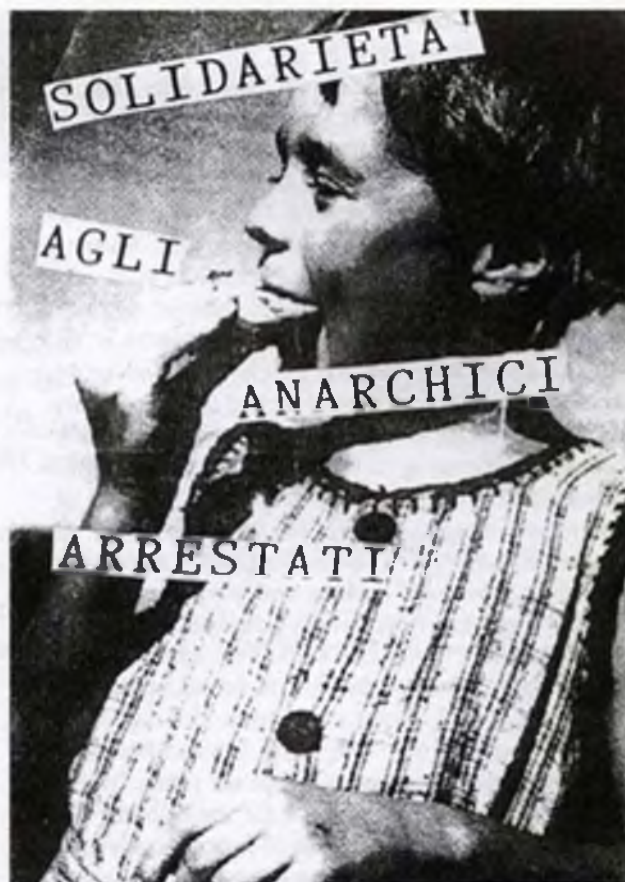
## Spreading Sabotage

The spreading of acts of sabotage over the past ten years against some of capital's ugliest and most dangerous expressions was getting out of hand. These actions were (and are) often claimed only with a few words, or simply with a circled 'A'. Raids had been carried out periodically, but with no positive outcome. So, not being able to prosecute the invisible 'night elves' responsible for the actions, judges in various regions, in particular Tuscany, attempted to prosecute those who openly supported them, namely Alfredo Bonanno, editor of *Provocazione* and *Anarchismo*. Dozens of trials were of no avail. In spite of the thundering accusations of the prosecution, the charge of 'instigation' was systematically demolished by the accused and his defence in a long series of judicial battles.

However, acts of sabotage continued to occur in many parts of the country—against the pylons of the state electricity company ENEL, against seven of TV magnate Berlusconi's Standa chain stores, against the electoral offices in Cagliari, Sardinia and against various military structures, two of which had taken place shortly before the great round up of the anarchists, one against the Italian air ministry in Rome causing hundreds of millions of lire (tens of thousands of pounds) worth of damage. Moreover, Italy marks the border between East and West, and in Albania, just the other side of the Adriatic, revolt was starting to rumble dangerously close to home. This fact must always be borne in mind when looking at Italy, or Greece for that matter. When these states show themselves to be incapable of keeping internal disorder within manageable limits, supercop USA begins to put pressure on the local police. Something had to be done.

## The Cops Get Their Break

The occasion arose with the arrest of five anarchists following a bank robbery in the north of Italy in 1994. The girlfriend of one of them, who was not an anarchist, became the object of particular attention and one day 'happened to meet' a handsome young officer of the *carabinieri* Special Operations Corps who had called into the night club where she was working. We don't know exactly what followed, just that they 'became friends' and that after a few days she was then taken to meet Marini. She then accused herself of being the woman involved in one of two more robberies the anarchists were now accused



of, and named her 'accomplices'. The trial, denounced as a frame up from the beginning, becomes a farce as she remembers nothing at all of her first and only bank hold up. All of the accused are convicted on the basis of her garbled words, giving her the stamp of approval as a credible state witness.

Then on September 17th 1996, twenty-nine arrest warrants are issued against anarchists all over Italy. Sixty-eight people, nearly all anarchists, are formally accused of belonging to an armed band called the ORAI, never heard of before that day. Marini holds a jubilant press conference. A dangerous anarchist organisation has been dismantled. Photographs of well known comrades are arranged in hierarchical order and roles assigned to each of them. Alfredo Bonanno is the elected leader. The name chosen for the organisation—*Organisazion Rivoluzionaria Anarchica Insurrezionalista*—is the subtitle of a text written by him, translated and handed out by comrades in Greece at a series of public conferences a few years earlier.

In Italy alone hundreds of people are doing centuries in special prisons as a result of nothing more than verbal accusations of what are known as 'crimes of association' (conspiracy is probably the nearest British equivalent) by self-proclaimed members of illegal organisations. This has led to a proliferation of *pentiti*, which have now become a mass phenomenon—thousands of social outcasts



set to spend the rest of their miserable existences in the care of the state.

All of the acts of sabotage claimed by anarchists over the next five years were consistently linked to the ORAI by Marini in the media, right up to the week before the verdict was due when he was guest on a TV talk show called 'Insurrection: Sex, Bombs and Anarchy'. Anarchist papers which came out in the mid 90s such as *Canenero*, *GAS* and others were defined as clandestine internal bulletins of the fictitious organisation. An anarchist accused of delivering a leaflet to Radio Popolare claiming a bomb attack on Palazzo Marini in Milan was presented in the press as belonging to the ORAI. Three anarchists arrested and accused of sabotage in support of the mass struggle against the proposed high speed railway in the Val de Suza were accused of terrorism against the state and linked to the ORAI. Two of them are now dead—Eduardo Massari was found hanging in his cell on March 28th 1998. His friend Maria Soledad Rosa was found hanged a month later in a community where she was being held against her will. The third, Silvano Pellissero, has recently been sentenced to six years "not for the nature of [his] crime, but for the popular consensus that [he] creates in a potentially explosive social situation" as the state prosecutor wrote. Comrades from the pirate station Radio Blackout are on trial accused of falsifying a secret ROS memo which they handed over to the police and defence lawyers after it reached them anonymously, in which the whole frame up against the anarchists was mapped out. The plan was simple: invent an organisation, find someone to swear they have been a member of it, back this up with proof of 'militancy' and then present them as a repentant sinner.

## Responses to Oppression

Like everything in reality, a court case is not something isolated from the whole of the social conditions at the time, so the question of what attitude to take to this sort of repression cannot be resolved in abstract terms but must be assessed in each specific context by the individuals involved. The law is only one aspect of the repressive apparatus of capital, and by no means the most effective one. It is usually a last resort when the more sophisticated preventative means have failed. It is therefore an admission of weakness, as boasting strength usually is. The most effective response is to continue to act as before, only *more* than before, adding scorn and anger to our disgust for everything that makes up this society of 'rights'. Far from protesting our innocence, we acclaim our guilt—our guilt of being anarchists, which is what we are really being tried for any time we find ourselves in the dock.

A frame up cannot be fought using the arms of the enemy: falsity and distortion. Nor can we simply oppose this with our 'truth'. Specific attacks by the law and the media aimed at distorting and putting a brake on conscious rebellion are the acid test of our capacity to continue to develop our whole revolutionary project, while remaining solid on its essential precepts—the horizontal spreading of that rebellion and the overthrow of the entirety of capitalist relations. We cannot let ourselves be tricked into the narrow blind alley of directing all our energies to responding to the provocation of the police and the courts. When you are confronted with dozens of comrades locked up on charges carrying life sentences that can be difficult. Suddenly the ideas and methods experimented with with such fun and effectiveness—small affinity groups and spreading sabotage where differences are enhanced and expressed to their full—seem to fade into a hazy kind of 'common front against repression' and suddenly everyone has to agree, leading to endless arguments and accusations, lowering the individual capacity for creative destruction. It is easy to slip into the logic of victims and oppressors, as though we had to prove ourselves blameless...

But such moments can also be times that push us to muster all our unexplored capacities and put them to the test, moving focus from the effects of the repressive attack to its causes, which is our real strength. The more they use the law as an instrument of repression, the further we should be moving away from it into the passionate, creative dimension of constant attack on the existent. Inventing a plurality of means to do so, thereby transforming the sadness and anger caused by the enforced separation from our comrades into boundless joy which, believe me, dissolves reinforced concrete and bends iron bars.

That was a metaphor of course—yet, when you think of it, it really happened a year later, only 60 kilometres away in Albania on the other side of the Adriatic, where within the space of a few weeks not one prison remained functioning.★

THE LAW IS ON THE BOOKS,  
BUT IT WOULD TAKE ALL  
THEIR RESOURCES TO  
ENFORCE IT.





# ACTION STATIONS!

## PLANNING DIRECT ACTION

This article explains some of the things to think about when planning an action. It's been written for smaller affinity group actions, rather than for mass street mobilisations. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide that has to be strictly followed, but more a list of things that might need to be sorted out for an action to happen successfully. Remember, in the best tradition of transferable skills and multitasking, many of the ideas mentioned here could be used in other areas of subversive activity. Eco-bank robbers anyone?



## PRE-ACTION

### Aims and Activity

What would you like the action to achieve? It may be education and agitation, economic damage, physical disruption, solidarity with others in struggle, or elements of all of these and more. It is best to clarify which is your priority. This helps identify the activity needed to achieve your aims.

You may decide on a banner drop, GM crop trashing, machine sabotage, office or site occupation, leafletting, propaganda production or something else completely.

### Target

You may have a target in mind already. If so, think through whether it is possible to achieve the aims wanted with the activity you've decided upon.

When you have an idea of the aims, activity and target you have an outline plan. That is—you know what you want to achieve, and will do so by taking a certain type of action on a specific target.

When you have this you can move onto the first reconnaissance (recce) for the action.

### Primary Recce

Even if the action is to be done at night it may be best to make this first recce a daylight one. Use it for gathering 'hard information'. Get maps, photographs and plans of the target and the surrounding area. Look for likely drop off points for people, entrance and exit points from the target as well as escape routes. Also look for places for the driver to park up away from the target, or circular routes that could be driven whilst the action takes place.

### Primary Plan

After the first recce sit down with your fellow planners in a secure location and work out a basic plan. This should include a route to the target that is free of CCTV, a drop off or park up point, entrance point/s into the target, exit point/s and escape route/s.

It should be decided when the action will take place, what time of day or night, roughly how long each part will take (getting to the drop off point, drop off point to target, doing the action, re-grouping, getting back to the pick up point and getting away) and how many people will be needed. The plan should also include where the vehicle will be left/taken and possible routes there.

The plan should also involve communications. This includes who might need to communicate with who and how on the action. This might be between drivers and the people they have dropped off, lookouts and people on the action or a radio scanner monitor and everybody else.

### Secondary Recce

If the action is going to be at night make this second recce at night as well so as to familiarise yourself with the area in the dark. It may be possible to do both recces on the same day, and then have time for planning the action afterwards.

On this second recce look at the target in more depth. Pay particular attention to any security systems. Actually time the different stages of the action. Think about what tools you will need to do the job and what you will do with them afterwards. Check out the approach and escape routes in more



# CHECKLIST FOR RECCES/ACTIONS

What follows is a checklist of equipment that may be needed for your recce or action. Use it as it stands or modify it for your particular group, way of working or task. Hopefully it will help avoid those awkward moments in the van when somebody asks, "So, who brought the map then?" and everybody looks blank.

## Group Tat

- ★ Transport with a full tank of petrol and keys
- ★ Vehicle breakdown and recovery details
- ★ Spare vehicle keys
- ★ Road map
- ★ Detailed map of action area
- ★ Communications gear with new batteries
- ★ Emergency money
- ★ Binliners for post-action evidence disposal
- ★ First Aid kit

As well as this you will need equipment that is specific to the recce or action that you are doing. Amongst other things it may be worth taking binoculars, radio scanner, notebook and pen, flag, camera and a Global Positioning System (GPS). You'll also need any tools or props specific to the tasks you are going to do on the action itself, i.e. sabotage tools, crowbar, sticks etc. Remember to take any spares or back up gear like new batteries.

## Individual Tat

- ★ Spare clothes and shoes
- ★ Waterproof jacket and trousers
- ★ Watch
- ★ Masks and other disguises
- ★ Gloves
- ★ Small torch (best with red or blue filter)
- ★ Compass and unmarked map of the area
- ★ Food and water (maybe a flask of hot drink)
- ★ Petrol and emergency money
- ★ Bag to carry stuff in

In addition to all this everybody going on the action should have a working knowledge of the whole plan and their role in it.



detail, and also the vehicle park up/driving route for during the action. They should all be CCTV-free and there should be alternatives in case of unpredictable circumstances such as cops, roadworks or other people parked up.

Check that the drop off and pick up points are away from buildings and lights, and there is space to turn a vehicle around. If the pick-up point is quite away from the target you may need to decide on a re-group point near the target so everyone leaves together.

Decide what communications equipment you will need and test that it works in the area. Think about the likelihood of carrying away evidence on your clothes and look for places on the getaway route for dumping clothes and perhaps tools. Look for possible regroup points (perhaps a mile or so away) where people could meet up if the action goes wrong and everyone has to scatter.

## Detailed Action Plan

This plan should fill out the basic plan with all the rest of the information needed to carry out the action. It should go from the point people meet to go on the action to the point people disperse at the end. It needs to include precise timings, which routes will be taken, what will be happening at each stage of the action, who will be communicating with who, what tools and other equipment will be needed, what will happen to the vehicle, and what roles need to be filled, e.g. driver, navigator, spotters etc.

The plan should also identify places to dump incriminating evidence as well as regroup point/s. If possible try and arrange to have a trusted person on the end of a phone, well away from the area the action is taking place in, who can be called in an emergency. It might be helpful if they had a large detailed map of the area to direct you if you ring up and are lost. Use a secure mobile for this rather than a landline.

## Back up Plans

The back up plan/s should be done in the same way as the main action plan. Back ups could be alternative actions to do at the target selected, or new targets entirely.

Consideration should be given to the conditions in which the initial plan will be abandoned and how the decision to revert to a back up plan will be made and communicated to others.

## Running Through the Plans

If possible everyone going on the action should be involved in talking through the plan and making any changes needed. Roles identified should be filled so everyone knows who is doing what. Decisions should be made about what to take (see box on 'Checklist for Recces/Actions') and it



should be established who is going to acquire the different items and bring them to the meeting point for the action. Everyone should make sure they have any mobile phone numbers or radio channels being used on the action. This is the point to identify any new skills the group will need to use and arrange to practice them in a 'neutral' setting rather than in the middle of an action.

Finally, people should decide how to organise themselves on the action. You could pair off in buddies or split into smaller groups. Doing this makes it easier to look after one another, move quickly and know if anyone is missing. Make sure everybody knows the names and addresses they will be using if arrested.

## ACTION

Before going to the meeting point for the action, run through the checklist of what you will need and give yourself time to get it all together. Be on time to meet up so people aren't left suspiciously hanging around. It may be best to meet up at a neutral place rather than somebody's house or the centre of town.

Once on the way to the action, make sure everyone is clear about what they are doing. Try not to stop on the way unless you really have to, and remember that if you do have to stop most petrol stations and town centres have CCTV. All being well, you'll arrive at your destination without incident. Put any disguises, such as hoods, masks or gloves, on at the last moment, as if you get pulled by the cops it's good to look straight.

If the action is taking place at night it's best not to use torches or internal car lights for around 20 minutes before you get dropped off. This allows your eyes to become accustomed to the dark.

Once the action starts try to keep focussed on what you are doing, but aware of where others are and what is going on around you. It's important to follow the communication structures you have decided on, e.g. making sure you are in earshot/sight of each other if you need to pass a message on/check everyone is there. Everyone should have a watch that has been synchronised beforehand, so at the designated finishing time for the action people know to re-group and get ready to leave. If there is no finish time maybe have an easily identifiable signal.

Get together at the re-group point and check everybody is there and okay. This is easier to do if everybody has teamed up into buddy pairs before the action and then sticks together and keeps an eye on each other. If people are missing try and find out what has happened to them. Depending on the type of action and what happened this may be a point where you want to destroy any incriminating evidence.

## SECURITY

To have a completely secure action is impossible. Whatever you do there is a risk of getting caught. Security is about taking measures to lessen the chances of this. A few ways people get caught include:

### Physical Evidence

Diaries, plans, manuals, stuff left at the action by accident or on purpose, communiqués, stored information on computers and paper trails from the use of bank cards and the hire or purchase of equipment. Avoid these by always paying cash and destroying or removing everything relating to the action before you go on it. Don't take anything traceable to you (like ID or engraved jewellery) on actions. Consider using false ID if you are hiring gear. If you must use a computer encrypt all files with PGP.

### Forensic Evidence

Mainly just fingerprints and DNA, but also includes matching up of tool usage, soil samples and footprints. Watch out for prints on things that aren't immediately obvious like torch batteries. Ensure everything is fingerprint free before the action and wear gloves and hats. Dispose of traceable items like clothes and tools as soon as possible post-action.

### Witnesses

People being able to identify you or your vehicle, not just at the action, but also on the way there, or even just leaving your house at a connected time. Includes images from CCTV or police video/stills teams. Plan meet-ups, routes to the action, etc. avoiding cameras and nosy neighbours. Disguise yourselves and wear indistinguishable clothes. Don't tell people what they don't need to know.

### Surveillance

Includes phone taps, post and email interception, listening devices and following you or placing tracking units in your vehicles. Conducted by numerous, and sometimes competing, state and private agencies. Operates at various levels from the fairly routine, which shouldn't effect your activity that much, through to ones where everything you say and do is listened to and watched. Avoid talking or communicating about anything action related in your home, over email or on a phone. Look out for cops following you on actions.

**FSU—DGCI**

Fuck What You Don't See Right?



If the action doesn't go according to plan and people are forced to scatter, try to stay with your buddy or group, move fast and keep in mind the direction you are going. If it's taking place at night you can very easily get disorientated and lost, so before the action have a look at the map and get a clear idea of what direction and where you could head to if this happens.

The most important thing is to not panic. Remember that many people have got out of the most pear-shaped situations by having a clear head and a grim determination not to be caught!

If it's possible get to the pre-arranged meeting point. If that's not an option get out of the area as quickly as you can, and ring the emergency mobile as soon as it is safe to do so so people know you're okay.

## POST ACTION

### Debrief

Try and have a meeting of all those that were on the action to discuss how the planning and execution of it went. Think about what was good and bad and try and learn lessons for the next action. This is best done in the first few days after before memories get fuzzy and important details are forgotten.

### Mutual Aid

Look after yourself and one another. Don't pressure people to go on actions if they are tired or stressed out. Take time out to relax and don't get into 'the struggle is my life' martyrdom headspace. Address problems and power relations within the group. In the longer term make an effort to learn skills that only one or two people have. This stops them being put under unnecessary pressure, and ensures a balance of responsibility.

### Security

Don't let your security slacken because the action is in the past. The cops have longer memories than we do and if your action is considered serious by the state an investigation into it can continue for months—or even years.

## Political Understanding

Analyse the tactical and strategic impact of your actions. Are there better targets or ways of operating? Read our history and learn from current and past struggles, movements and groups.

## Communication

It is sometimes useful to communicate to other people what you have done. Maybe write a short article reporting the action for *SchNEWS*, *Earth First! Action Update* and other newsletters. Consider issuing an anonymous press release/communiqué to other media. These could be done through an anonymous web based email service set up for this purpose and then only used once. Maybe produce flyposters or stickers about the action and put them up around your local area and send them to other groups. If useful lessons were learnt from the action let other people know by writing a leaflet, discussion document or article.

## Broadening the Struggle

Help facilitate other people's involvement in the resistance. If you have a closed cell/group help interested people set up another group. If you work in an open group let people know what you are doing and how they can get involved. Doing stalls and printing leaflets with your contact details on are two ways of doing this. Continue with your own activity!★

## Further Reading

*Ecodefence!—A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* edited by Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood (Third Edition, Abbzug Press, 1993) ISBN 0-9637751-0-3

*Ozymandias Sabotage Skills Handbook Volume 1—Getting Started* by Anonymous (Self Published, First Edition 1995) No ISBN.

Check the web at:

[http://cafeunderground.com/Cafe/site/Rooms/Ozymandias/sabotage\\_index.html](http://cafeunderground.com/Cafe/site/Rooms/Ozymandias/sabotage_index.html)

*Road Raging—Top Tips for Wrecking Road Building* published by Road Alert! (Self Published, Second Edition 1998) No ISBN.

Check the web at: [www.eco-action.org](http://www.eco-action.org)

'An Interview with an ALF Activist' in *Without a Trace* by Anonymous (Self Published pamphlet) No ISBN.

## TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1993





# LESSONS FROM SMASH GENETICS!

In July 1999 an ambitious and risky Genetically Modified (GM) crop-trashing action called 'Smash Genetics!' happened. It started well, with almost 100 people arriving at the 25 acre site undetected by police, but ended with about 40 arrests and the farmer claiming the wrong crop had been destroyed. (For a full account see *Do or Die* Number 8, p.104 and the *Earth First! Action Update* Issue 61, August 1999.) Here are some of the lessons that can be learnt from this action.

1) A sample of the crop from the site was laboratory tested before the action and the results tested positive for GM. After the action another sample was tested (because of the farmer's claims) and it came out as non-GM. Because of this potential lab error, if you are going to test, take 4 samples—one from each corner of the site.

2) People stayed in the field far too long—an hour and a quarter in the end. Despite leaving when there still wasn't any police build-up, it shouldn't have been left so late. If people had left 10 minutes earlier we wouldn't have run into the police on the main road (bad timing!) and more people (or everybody) might have got away.

3) When leaving there was an incredible amount of faffing—with some people not seeming to realise that there was any danger or urgency. This led to incredible frustration. People need to get fitter and be able to run faster. After this action some people and groups have taken up running!

4) Transport was arranged regionally, with only the regional contacts knowing a bit of the plan—but not the escape route. Affinity groups should have been trusted more and given access to the escape plans and maps prior to the action. This would have enabled them to make their own group decisions (in the best anarchist tradition!) rather than relying on organisers to lead the way out of the action. Too few people knew the escape route, and some of them were arrested before they got very far! Big mistake. As with street parties this 'open publicity/secret plan' model creates a bad dynamic—a hierarchy between those 'in the know' and the 'masses'. This could be significantly challenged, without security being breached, by briefing affinity groups before the action.

5) Many people criticised the escape route, but with the flat and tree-less Lincolnshire landscape it seemed like the best option. It used what little tree cover there was as much as was possible, and much thought went into it. Other options looked a lot worse. However the GM site was registered to a farmhouse on the other side of the road, and nobody realised that the same farmer owned the estate where the escape route went. Simple research would have revealed this.

6) The vehicles drove down a dead-end track to pick everybody up off the escape route, and ended

up being blocked in by farm workers. This was a big mistake. Before the action it seemed a toss-up between the risks of driving a conspicuous convoy around the countryside, or attempting to hide the vehicles near the escape route and hope they weren't spotted. In the end the drivers drove around waiting for a call, but the mobile phones failed when the people in the field were ready to leave. When the call finally got through the drivers missed the turn-off to the pick-up point and went up the dead end by mistake. The farm workers were remarkably up for it and organised, using tractors to block the track and CB radios to communicate. We broke the first rule of hunt sabbing, "Never take a vehicle into a field."

7) Some people have said that although we were blocked in by farm workers with tractors there were very few of them and a lot of us. We could perhaps have 'persuaded' them and their expensive tractors to move, releasing our vehicles.

8) The publicity for the action was criticised for being a bit aggressive, but it was deliberately designed to make it clear that this action was going to be a bit 'hardcore'. It clearly stated that it was 'direct action', and that press and cameras weren't welcome. The name 'Smash Genetics!' should have been a bit of a give away too! Perhaps if people from each affinity group knew more about the nature of the action they could have helped people from their area make a more informed choice, or dissuade some people (those bringing kids, those unable to run) from coming. As mentioned in point 4 there could have been more trust between people and groups.

9) Flags are so cool! They worked brilliantly for helping to find one another.

10) The word of mouth way that each town/region got to the target without a single cop in attendance was impressive. A good model to build upon.

11) Even if it was the 'wrong' field, and it would obviously have been better to get the GM one, economic damage to a leading GM farmer isn't a bad thing! Next time get the expensive farm machinery too (and his posh house while we're at it). In this context a good blow was still struck against GM in the UK.★

Adapted from an anonymous leaflet produced after the action.



# WHAT TO DO IF ARRESTED

Hopefully nobody should get arrested on your action. In most situations getting nicked can be avoided by planning, employing common sense, sticking with your buddy or affinity group and looking out for one another. What happens if it all fucks up, or your luck runs out and you do get caught? A few precautions will make it much more likely that you'll get off—even when you're blatantly guilty m'lud!

## Before You Go-Go

Now is the time to think about using a false name and address if you want to. Sort this out with the person whose house you are using and tell them the name you'll use. A note by the phone helps to remind them!

As visits to the homes of people detained by the cops are becoming commonplace it may be a good idea to warn them that a visit from the cops is possible. Look around your living space. Is there anything like maps, plans, sabotage manuals, diaries, address books or drugs that you wouldn't want the cops to see?

## If You're Arrested

Use your judgement to know whether to struggle like fuck, and hope you can get away, or whether to just accept the arrest. Often you can get away—especially if others help de-arrest you—but the risk is that if you don't you may well end up having an assault on a cop or resisting arrest added to your charges. If you get away leave the area as soon as possible—they'll be looking for you later!

If you are finally arrested shout out the name you'll be using so that people know who's been nicked. Try and remember the numbers of your arresting officer/s. You will probably be handcuffed and put in a police vehicle for transport to the nearest cop station. If possible use this chance to get rid of anything connected to the action like tools, bust cards, gloves or mask.

## At the Cop Shop

As soon as you arrive at the station plead to go to the toilet. Use this opportunity to flush incriminating propaganda down the toilet and wash thoroughly to try and destroy forensic evidence—maybe even scrubbing your shoes if appropriate.

You will be stood in front of the custody desk for processing. This involves giving them a name (only give a first and last name) and address (and date of birth if under 21). If over 21 you don't have to give a date of birth, although not giving one may delay your release as most of their computer cross referencing is done by date of birth. Your arresting officer should then explain what you've been nicked for. You'll be searched and your possessions will be taken off you, noted down and you will be asked to sign for them. Read it carefully to check

they haven't added anything and sign directly underneath. This is the only thing you should sign.

You have the right to know why you have been arrested and to have someone informed of your arrest. You also have the right to speak to a solicitor of your choice. Don't use the duty solicitor as they're often on friendly terms with the cops. Use one you know is okay, or the one mentioned on the bust card or in the pre-action briefing.

You will probably then be put in a cell to spend hours waiting while they decide what to do with you and check that you are who you say you are—usually done by sending cops round to the address you've given to see if they know you there. Use the time to prepare yourself in case they interview you.

If they do decide to interview you it is usually because they haven't got enough evidence to charge you straight away, and are hoping you'll give something away in the interview. Even admitting you were on the action is often enough to convict you. Answer "no comment" to everything. Never, ever say anything else.

Sometimes they try to get you to answer or fill in these profiling/political associates and affiliations questionnaires. Don't!

If charged you should be bailed and released. Once charged the police are entitled to use force to take fingerprints and a DNA sample, but not to photograph you. Be aware that they will probably try to take your photo without you knowing. This is especially likely when you first arrive or when they get you out of your cell for anything. Watch out!

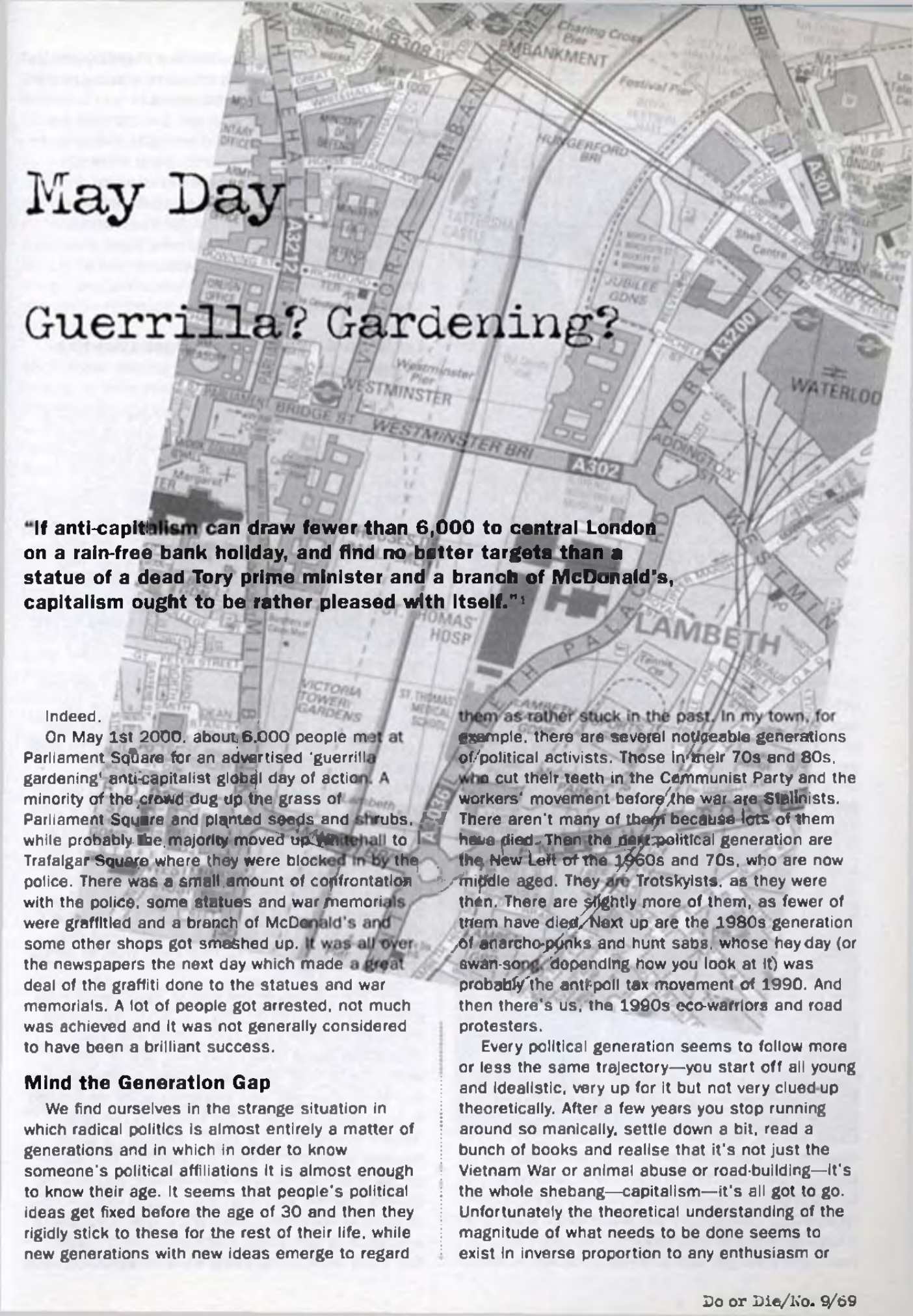
If you need a doctor in custody make sure you see one and get your injuries recorded. If the police have assaulted you go straight to the hospital on release. When released make an appointment to see a solicitor to find out if it is possible to sue the fuckers.

## Remember Kids!

- ★ Don't chat with the cops—even informally—it gives them information to use against us.
- ★ You only have to give them a name and address.
- ★ Answer "no comment" to all other questions that they ask you.
- ★ Do not make a statement or sign anything—apart from your possessions list.

# NOBODY TALKS AND EVERYBODY WALKS!





# May Day

## Guerrilla? Gardening?

**"If anti-capitalism can draw fewer than 6,000 to central London on a rain-free bank holiday, and find no better targets than a statue of a dead Tory prime minister and a branch of McDonald's, capitalism ought to be rather pleased with itself."**

Indeed.

On May 1st 2000, about 6,000 people met at Parliament Square for an advertised 'guerrilla gardening' anti-capitalist global day of action. A minority of the crowd dug up the grass of Parliament Square and planted seeds and shrubs, while probably the majority moved up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square where they were blocked in by the police. There was a small amount of confrontation with the police, some statues and war memorials were graffitied and a branch of McDonald's and some other shops got smashed up. It was all over the newspapers the next day which made a great deal of the graffiti done to the statues and war memorials. A lot of people got arrested, not much was achieved and it was not generally considered to have been a brilliant success.

### Mind the Generation Gap

We find ourselves in the strange situation in which radical politics is almost entirely a matter of generations and in which in order to know someone's political affiliations it is almost enough to know their age. It seems that people's political ideas get fixed before the age of 30 and then they rigidly stick to these for the rest of their life, while new generations with new ideas emerge to regard

them as rather stuck in the past. In my town, for example, there are several noticeable generations of political activists. Those in their 70s and 80s, who cut their teeth in the Communist Party and the workers' movement before the war are Stalinists. There aren't many of them because lots of them have died. Then the next political generation are the New Left of the 1960s and 70s, who are now middle aged. They are Trotskyists, as they were then. There are slightly more of them, as fewer of them have died. Next up are the 1980s generation of anarcho-punks and hunt sabs, whose hey day (or swan-song, depending how you look at it) was probably the anti-poll tax movement of 1990. And then there's us, the 1990s eco-warriors and road protesters.

Every political generation seems to follow more or less the same trajectory—you start off all young and idealistic, very up for it but not very clued-up theoretically. After a few years you stop running around so manically, settle down a bit, read a bunch of books and realise that it's not just the Vietnam War or animal abuse or road-building—it's the whole shebang—capitalism—it's all got to go. Unfortunately the theoretical understanding of the magnitude of what needs to be done seems to exist in inverse proportion to any enthusiasm or





energy for actually accomplishing this task. Those that don't give up entirely knuckle under for The Long Haul as from the lofty heights of Theory Attained they suspiciously watch a new generation of naive bright-eyed youngsters make exactly the same mistakes they made 15 years before.<sup>2</sup>

This is more or less what has happened to the direct action movement over the not-quite 10 years of its existence. A lot of the ill feelings surrounding May Day are explained by our love-hate relationship with our immediate political forebears—the 1980s generation of anarchists. The initial reaction of that generation to the emergence of Earth First! (EF!) and the whole anti-CJA, free party, road protest scene seemed to be pretty dismissive.

However, what goes around comes around and the continuing growth and success of the direct action movement contrasted noticeably with the lack of growth and lack of success of the politics of the older generation. However, because to them we represented everything they had moved away from—pacifism, single-issue politics, counter-cultural lifestyle—they generally continued to dismiss and ignore us until we began to move along the same trajectory that they had done and started talking about capitalism and class struggle.

And our star was still rising as theirs was waning. In 1997, the Class War Federation, one of the main 1980s anarchist formations, disbanded, publishing a final issue of the newspaper.<sup>3</sup> The process of this dissolution and a hunt for new ideas and new ways forward resulted in the Bradford May Day 98 conference. The 1 in 12 Club (a sort of legalised anarcho-punk social centre) in Bradford had for a number of years organised 'Reclaim May Day' activities to counteract the total lack of anything with a radical edge happening around May Day. It was decided by some of the ex-Class War lot, together with some others, to hold a weekend long discussion conference in Bradford to coincide with this. They made a very obvious effort to reach out to and include ecological direct action types in the conference. The whole affair was amazingly chummy and good-natured and pretty much everyone got on like a house on fire. A few

months later a few of the Bradford May Day and ex-Class War lot returned the favour by coming to the EF! Summer Gathering in Somerset.

Perhaps inspired by what the 1 in 12 Club had been doing, the idea of 'Reclaiming May Day' had been quietly gaining momentum for a while. On May Day 99, there were events in London, Nottingham, Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, Hull and Portsmouth. The London event was a Reclaim the Streets organised tube party, in which about 1,000 people occupied and partied on a tube train in support of the tube workers and against privatisation.

## Let's do Another One... Just Like the Other One...

Then there was June 18th.

June 18th 1999 was chosen as the date for a global day of action targeting financial districts across the world, pushing explicitly anti-capitalist politics and co-ordinated internationally by a network of anti-capitalist organisations committed to direct action. In this country a lot of people all pulled together to work on it and spent the best part of a year doing so. And the end result was widely seen as a great success—thousands of people, hardly any arrests, the whole City of London disrupted, shut down and smashed up and the word 'anti-capitalism' on the front of every newspaper (for what it's worth).<sup>4</sup>

Ah, but success comes at a price, and not only the continuous succession of arrests since the day. Suddenly, all sorts of people sit up and take notice and want in on the excitement; want to push this movement in what they see as the right direction. The 80s anarchoes largely missed out on organising J18 but got very excited about this 'new movement' afterwards, perhaps not appreciating how much work had gone into organising the day. They immediately wanted to do it again—just like that, as if it was that easy, as if we could pull successful riots out of a hat. Meanwhile everyone who had just put the last year of their lives into organising J18 wanted nothing more than to lie low and rest up a while.

The first I heard of the idea of there being a big global day of action on May 1st 2000 was during the summer after June 18th. There was much discussion about what to do next, and at that year's Earth First! Summer Gathering after the idea had been proposed and enthusiastically responded to by a large number of the people at the large 'Where Now After June 18th?' meeting, a small informal sub-meeting was got together with some people from EF!, London Greenpeace, Reclaim the Streets and the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC). Out of some of these discussions a happy coincidence emerged—it turned out that London ABC people had been considering doing some Bradford 98-style



May Day event in London anyway, and unbeknownst to them the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, who were the North American convenors for the international Peoples' Global Action (PGA) network, had proposed May 1st as the date of a global general strike and day of action. This proposal had been taken to the PGA gathering in Bangalore in India where it had been enthusiastically taken up. So it looked like it was all coming together—various different groups of people had been separately thinking the same thing. We didn't need to network an international proposal—someone else had already been doing it for us.

So those looking for something to build on June 18th, those looking to simply repeat J18, those looking to have another anarchist conference like Bradford 98 and various other groups around the world had all independently been thinking along the same lines. However, it didn't look like it was going to be possible to pull off another June 18th; for a start, there wasn't so much time before May 1st and also there clearly wasn't the same level of commitment. People seemed to be interested and to think that it was a good idea, but there's a clear difference between that and everyone being ready to put lots of work into it. An organising group of mainly 80s anarchos got together in London to organise the London May Day thing and produced a quite astronomical number of flyers for the Anarchist Bookfair in October which were also quite astronomically bad. Some of the cod-RTS publicity that was produced by the May Day 2000 group was truly cringe-worthy in its cack-handed efforts to be 'down with the kids'. It was a bit like watching the vicar at the school disco.

There was a meeting at the Bookfair but it all seemed to be a bit of a foregone conclusion as the London organising group had already decided what they were doing. The format of what was going to happen seemed to have been settled fairly early on. In part it was dictated by the calendar—May 1st 2000 was a bank holiday Monday. The obvious thing to do was to have a weekend of events leading up to the big day on the Monday. The flyers said that May Day 2000 would be a four day event, with some stuff happening on the Friday, a two-day conference over the weekend and then a huge enormous action in central London on the Monday.

A lot of people wondered who was going to organise, inside 6 months, this huge enormous action that was going to top June 18th.

### **Euston, We Have a Problem...**

In the meantime Seattle happened. November 30th was the beginning of the Third Ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle in the USA, and a global day of action was called against it. In this country little

happened except a demonstration that kicked off a bit outside Euston station in North London and was to an extent overshadowed by the rather more impressive events going on in Seattle.

After J18 there wasn't really the time or anyone with enough energy to organise anything big for November 30th. However, some people in London organised a rally at Euston station, which was really intended to be just that—a rally with speakers on a platform against tube privatisation, tying it in with globalisation. However, it was advertised as 'Reclaim the Railways', with glossy flyers and posters all over the place. The organisers naively thought they could organise an RTS event in central London, advertise it as such, get thousands of people there and those thousands of people would realise it was only a rally and would obediently not have a riot.

Surprise, surprise, half-way through the speeches it all kicked off and people attacked the police, turning over and setting on fire a police van. The attack on the police took them by surprise but it really was not a very good place to have a riot as the forecourt of Euston station is a concrete box which was surrounded on every side by cops. Also, unlike June 18th, nothing had been organised for this one (because it was only *supposed* to be a rally) and so there were no masks being given out and no attempt was made to disable cameras. A lot of people got their faces caught on camera, a lot of people got nicked and at the end of the day was it really worth it? Also, some were upset by the huge amounts of negative publicity the event got in the media, with the same picture of the burning cop van reproduced on the front page of every newspaper.



The Euston event was perhaps important in solidifying people's opinions about May Day. It seems there was a bit of a feeling of—"we *must* be able to organise an action that won't end in a ruck". People felt that RTS was being manoeuvred into a category of 'violent thugs' and that





thereafter anything they ever did would be associated with this label. Taken together with the new Terrorism Act, it would then be possible to criminalise the organisation, safely isolate the whole movement from the majority of the population and repress it. If J18 was a bit of a high-water mark then perhaps N30 just confirmed some people's impressions of the way things were going and made their minds up that the same thing should not happen on May Day.<sup>5</sup>

## A Moot Point

The real crunch point came at the EFI Winter Moot in January in Oxford. This was really the only opportunity to get together and discuss May Day in anything like a national forum. The main issues that seemed to be raised by the discussion were: the process that led up to the event and the way that the whole thing had come about, the 'national' versus 'local' thing, and a certain element of liberal/pacifist panic (as well as an element of genuine fear) about the (as it turned out entirely correct) possibility that May Day would turn into some sort of street confrontation. The discussion around this point was very awkward because those in favour of a riot did not feel safe speaking their mind in a large, relatively open meeting, whereas those of the opposite persuasion certainly did.

The question of whether there was going to be a huge spectacular London action was essentially left to the May Day 2000 people and Reclaim the Streets to sort out between them. Most EFI groups from around the country decided in favour of organising their own local May Day events (impressive actions happened in Bristol, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow and elsewhere), so it was left to RTS, as the London group, to decide if they were into organising another huge action, such as had already been publicised by the May Day 2000 group.

The whole May Day event felt slightly misplaced from the outset in some respects. Whereas other recent large events like June 18th have had their roots in the Earth First!/Reclaim the Streets radical ecological direct action network, May Day was initiated and followed through by 80s anarchists from the scene revolving around the ex-Class War lot, Haringey Solidarity Group and the Anarchist Federation (previously the Anarchist Communist Federation [who should win some sort of award for consciously changing their name to make it worse]). And even if we reject the sort of lunatic conspiracy theories promoted by *Green Anarchist* that the whole of May Day, like Bradford May Day 98 before it, was part of some grand plot, directed from Chumbawamba's secret bunker deep beneath the streets of Leeds, to hijack the direct action movement and turn us all into proxies of the 'anarcho-Leftist power complex' or some such, still it was a right old balls-up.<sup>6</sup>

There was a widespread feeling that the organisers of the May Day 2000 conference were somehow forcing the hand of EFI/RTS people into organising a big spectacular action for them. A lot of people resented the idea that they were expected to just produce the goods on demand. The perception was that the 80s anarchos were trying to jump on the bandwagon and force their organisation and their politics on people in much the same way that Trotskyist groups like the SWP do. They wanted to do J18 again but this time with their politics draped all over it. It was like a division of labour—you organise the action thing and we'll sort out the theory—manual and mental labour. They'd organise a conference for two days beforehand to provide the necessary politics for a proper understanding of the public disorder that would then be obligingly provided by EFI/RTS. The May Day 2000 people denied that they were expecting EFI/RTS to organise their action for them; they said that they were organising an action and that if RTS wanted to organise one together with them or alongside theirs then that would be great. But due to a lack of forethought and a lack of understanding of how the radical eco scene functions and the resulting missing discussion and co-ordination between the May Day 2000 crew and



the EFi/RTS network it felt like an attempt by the 80s anarchists to repackage *their* political ideologies with *our* methods of activity.

## Tuesday Night's All Right (for Fighting)

So it was left to RTS to decide if they were up for organising a May Day action...

Unfortunately, at this point the whole thing ran up against the rock of RTS Tuesday night meetings, which are, for anyone who has ever attended one, infamous. The Tuesday night meetings are, on average, so abysmal that lots of long-time experienced RTS activists no longer attend them, or if they do, they miss the actual meeting and only turn up to the pub afterwards. However, the meetings are open to all and RTS having got itself quite a reputation and quite a high profile, they are regularly full of first-timers who have never attended one before and have come along more out of curiosity than anything else. Having no real structure of any kind, the Tuesday night meeting is however the only 'official' decision-making body that RTS has. Therefore when the question of whether RTS should organise a May Day action came up in the meeting, people decided that would be a great idea. The problem being that of the people who decided it would be a great idea, most of them probably didn't really know what it was they were deciding and weren't prepared to put any work into it. The people with the experience necessary to organise a big action like May Day was obviously going to be had not really had any input into this decision. So then the ill-defined and contradictory entity that calls itself 'RTS' found itself in the position of having committed itself to organising an action without any idea of who exactly was going to organise it.

Those who had been suggesting that the May Day 2000 people were expecting RTS to come along and organise their action for them seemed to be proved right as the day got closer and closer and the May Day 2000 'action faction' consistently failed to organise anything, despite having distributed about a billion flyers saying there was going to be a huge action. It seems like they were

a bunch of people who were a hell of a lot better at producing leaflets than they were at actually organising anything.

The people who ended up organising the RTS action must have had to operate under very stressful conditions. Quite a long time before the day the police/media hype began in earnest. The day got nearer, the hype grew and the predictions of a bloodbath became ever more extreme. A day or two before the action, *Evening Standard* ads around London announced: "Army on Standby for London Riot"—I, for one, would not like to be organising an action under those circumstances! In retrospect this ludicrous hype was clearly designed to frighten people away from attending, and very probably contributed to the slightly disappointing turn-out. It also contrasted markedly with the generally low-key policing on the day, largely aimed at containment and avoiding provoking anything worse.

## The Action

On the day there weren't as many people as some had hoped. The night before the action, in the squat accommodation that had been opened up, I remember being enthusiastically told there could be 15,000 people. Which perhaps was not so unreasonable—June 18th was on a Friday and got that many and this was a bank holiday Monday when no one had to work. However, May Day hadn't been publicised as much and the message of the "This is not a protest" publicity might well have been lost on quite a lot of people. And for the people that did turn up at the original meeting time of 11.00am nothing happened for at least an hour and a half until the Critical Mass-style cycle ride-cum-march showed up from Hyde Park Corner with all the props and equipment. All that time while thousands of people were hanging around in the Square no one made any kind of announcement and so by the time the 'action' started, many people had simply left out of boredom. Although the eventual turn-out was then in some respects a little disappointing, there were still more than sufficient numbers left for guerrilla gardening.





Judging the event by what the organisers wanted to achieve, it was fairly successful. The crowd was not prevented from taking Parliament Square as some had anticipated might happen. When in Parliament Square people got on and did the gardening according to plan and then in some form got together and used the 'open mic' PA system thing the organisers had got together to make a collective decision and negotiate their way past the lines of cops. When the cops didn't seem to want to let us out we all joined together to push our way out (which was by far the best bit of the whole day in my experience). The banners and decor were, as usual, excellent (all excepting the 'This is a Peaceful Protest' banner). The Maypole was great, the 'Reclaim the Streets' police hazard warning tape was a smart idea, the samba band were again, as usual, great. And the innovation of having shield barrier things carried along the edge of the crowd on the Critical Mass didn't work too badly although they did hide the samba band and the dancers they were supposed to be protecting from police snatch squads. The banners (which were made of heavy-duty tarp with wooden spars and handles bolted on) were a bit awkward to move but did prove to be useful later on for pushing through cop lines in the escape from Parliament Square.

So was it a fuck-up or not? And why were so many people annoyed about it? Is it just that we've got higher expectations than we used to have or what? If we can't get to smash up a stock exchange every time then we all go home in a sulk? Given that the action achieved pretty much everything the organisers wanted it to achieve and it was still fairly dismal, the problem must therefore be with their plan in the first place. The fact that it succeeded reveals its inadequacies more than if it had failed.

## The Motivations of the Organisers

The main motivation behind the May Day action seems to have been a desire to try and break out of the typical dynamic of street parties and the pitfall of being forced to keep producing even bigger and more spectacular spectaculars—trapped by the hype and expectations you yourself

have created. As the Bash Street Kids have said, "One successful action doesn't necessarily lead to another. It can even make things harder for next time, by combining a yardstick to live up to with a method that's already been used."<sup>7</sup> This pithy little sentence could serve as a neat summation of the almost the entire history of RTS. Having invented the street party and come up with a winning formula, RTS very quickly became victims of their own success. They became trapped into repeating this formula indefinitely, and any attempts to break from this merely ended up in not-quite-so-good street parties. After the third London street party on the M41 motorway, lots of people involved in RTS said they'd never do another. But being unable to come up with anything to match the street party formula, they ended up doing another... and another... The March for Social Justice/Never Mind the Ballots! event in April 1997 effectively ended up being a street party in Trafalgar Square, then there was the global street party in Birmingham on May 16th 1998, followed swiftly by the local London street parties later in the summer, which were intended to be de-centralised and everywhere, but ended up being just one in North London and one in South London happening simultaneously. This already existing problem was clearly in evidence a number of years ago and was only exacerbated by the larger success and higher stakes of June 18th.

It seems that having recognised the impossibility of organising another June 18th given the constraints they were under and prompted by the experience of Euston on November 30th, the organisers decided to try and escape the long shadow of J18 hanging over them by consciously organising something very different that would neither be compared unfavourably to its illustrious forebear, or attract those who since J18 seemed to turn up expecting every RTS event to be a riot.

The organisation of May Day was also motivated by a wish not to replicate the spectator/participant dynamic from previous street parties and to break down the distinction between the 'leaders' and the 'led'. One of the many criticisms that have been raised of street parties over the last few years is







the way in which their organisation relies on a secretive group planning the whole thing for the masses who turn up on the day as simple consumers of the party laid on for their benefit by others. Also on the day itself there is often a division between 'spectators' and 'participants' within the crowd, e.g. some of the party people will be content to dance while others are physically defending the space they are dancing in from police attacks. So the organisers quite boldly relied on the people attending to participate and contribute to the event by bringing things themselves and all mucking in. Again this was perhaps a case of making a virtue out of necessity—not having the ability to organise everything the organisers were forced to rely to a greater extent on the people attending.

So how to bring all these concerns together? How to follow up June 18th on a bank holiday Monday with an action in which everyone will be forced to participate? How, as a secretive clique, to organise an action in which people will not just turn up as consumers of a party that the secretive clique has organised? How to organise a big action in central London that won't involve any violence?

## Guerrilla? Gardening?

And lo! The answer was arrived at—guerrilla gardening! That's 'green' (and therefore 'fluffy') and no one will be able to stand around and watch, they'll all have to muck in. The idea being that eco stuff is more positive and fluffy and wouldn't kick off—the action would just be a creative, peaceful event to do with growing things, creating not destroying etc.—that somehow the positive influence of all those shrubs in the vicinity would stop people lobbing things at the cops.

The whole idea of guerrilla gardening was flawed from the outset—it sounds great on paper, but as soon as you actually give any thought to how it might work it becomes obvious that it probably won't. The idea of guerrilla gardening, as far as I understand it, was derived from two different sources. Firstly, guerrilla gardening proper as practised by lots of people to brighten up the areas they live in... surreptitiously going about planting seeds wherever you go—in road verges, traffic islands, cracks in the pavement etc. Giving wild nature a helping hand to re-colonise some of the uniform grey space of urban Britain. Guerrilla gardening when done like this can be awe-inspiring, practical ecological restoration and subversive activity done in a really simple and fun way. Secondly, there is guerrilla gardening as in urban land squats, most famously in New York where squatted urban gardens have been providing food and a green oasis in the city around them for over 20 years.<sup>8</sup>

These two things are both examples of practical ecological direct action, and both in their own way very good things. The mistake was to think that this idea could be taken and applied to a one-day protest in central London. The essential point about the first sort of guerrilla gardening is that it is done by individuals or small groups in a very low-key way; it might not work exactly the same if 5,000 people all descended on the same area and tried to do it all at once. And the essential point about the New York-style urban squatted gardens is that they are permanent and they are maintained and looked after; it might not work exactly the same if 5,000 drunk people tried to do it in an afternoon.

We had all seen the publicity, but no one could really imagine how it was going to work. Either they



were planning to take a concrete, paved space and dig it up to plant stuff (shades of the M41?) which would be dead cool if we could do it but would up the ante quite a lot and so was probably not very likely (and even if we had done this it would still have been abandoned the next day and trashed), or they were going to go for a very non-confrontational option and march us all off to a piece of wasteground or something and have us garden there (a bit like The Land is Ours 'Pure Genius' occupation of disused land at Gargoyle Wharf in Wandsworth in 1996) which I thought much more likely, and would certainly hold much more potential for holding on to and maintaining the site if anyone could be bothered.

Instead what we got was something in the middle—digging up and gardening something at least vaguely confrontational that was also diggable. Not such a bad choice under the circumstances, but it does seem that we had been the victims of circumstance all along. We were sabotaged by the date in a way—a lot of the problems with the action were unavoidable once RTS had committed itself to organising something big on May Day. People felt backed into a corner and forced to do an action on a bank holiday Monday. Few businesses are working on bank holidays and so the possible targets of the action were automatically limited—the protest was bound to be almost entirely symbolic from that point forward. (Despite the propaganda claiming "This is not a Protest", that is exactly what it was—a symbolic protest, not dissimilar to Friends of the Earth putting sandbags around the Climate Conference in the Hague or Jubilee 2000 forming rings around things.) Then it was felt there was little choice but to go with guerrilla gardening because there was nothing else to do on a bank holiday Monday. Given this choice of action, Parliament Square was not such a bad location. But the whole concept of doing a one day guerrilla gardening action in central London should never have been chosen in the first place.

On May Day there was absolutely nothing for the vast majority of the crowd to do. The organisers had not considered the contradiction between publicising an action and trying to get as many people as possible to attend and then trying to transform the ground they were all standing on into a garden. Guerrilla gardening is not appropriate as a mass activity. There were too many people in Parliament Square to make any sort of gardening a realistic possibility. When people got the signal that we weren't going to be led off anywhere else and that this was the location for the action, they started trying to dig up and 'garden' the turf that people were standing on. As more and more of the turf was removed and 'gardenised', there simply wasn't anywhere for people to go but out of

Parliament Square. People ended up trampling all over the flowerbeds of tulips that surrounded the grass in the square. Also there were only so many people that could actually be involved in the gardening. Even if every single person there had had a trowel they couldn't have physically all gardenised at once. There wasn't even room for them all to stand on the ground we were supposed to be gardening. So the idea of everyone being participants fell at the first hurdle. Most of the people were *necessarily* going to be spectators. And of course what efforts at gardening were made mostly got trampled by people forced back into the square by the police. It didn't help that the police had waterlogged all the turf of Parliament Square the night before the action. Presumably they were thinking it would stop people sitting down there or something. It made it easier to dig up the grass but coupled with thousands of feet stomping all over the place, the 'garden' was quickly turned into something vaguely reminiscent of what's left over at the end of the Glastonbury festival.

It didn't do much for our claims to be beautifying the grey landscape of urban Britain that we turned an admittedly rather sterile and antiseptic lawn into a squalid quagmire. We made it look shit, to be honest. It was kind of embarrassing to be there. Especially when you consider that on a bank holiday Monday thousands of working class people would have been out working on their allotments and would have come home, switched on the telly and seen our efforts at gardening. It was all pretty much summed up by the people I saw ripping up the tulips (minus their roots) out of their flowerbeds around the grass in the square and 'transplanting' them to the cracks between the paving stones, where they went brown and died.



That was especially dumb, but not out of character with the action as a whole. Even if, by some freak chance 5,000 pissed people *had* managed to turn Parliament Square into a beautiful forest garden of fruit bushes and apple trees inside 6 hours, it would still all have disappeared



into Westminster City refuse sacks by 9 o'clock the next morning. Call me a tree-hugging eco-centrist if you will, but to ask people to sacrifice living things for an action seems to be a particularly *un-ecological* thing to do. What's the point of planting an illegal garden if you aren't prepared to stay and defend it and you aren't going to be around to eat the fruit?

In a way we ended up in a situation which was the worst of both worlds—neither fish nor fowl—a squatted garden which we didn't defend and occupy, 'guerrilla' gardening which was in no sense 'guerrilla'—totally bloody obvious actually.

## Peace In Our Time

The choice of action seems to have been sizeably determined by a desire for it not to kick off. The meeting point for the action was changed from Bond Street to Parliament Square specifically to ensure people didn't start trying to smash up West End shops and got the idea that this *really* was just a gardening action. Likewise the only tools supplied for this gardening were plastic trowels, because the organisers thought that anything else might be able to be used as a weapon or would be construed as such by the cops and seized.

It seems there was a feeling within RTS, but also elsewhere, that people were a bit scared by the forces they had unleashed. They felt trapped into this cycle of everything they ever organised turning into a mini-riot and were looking for a mass action in central London that wouldn't kick off. A search which I would suggest is doomed to failure and only made things worse. It would be preferable to expect and to prepare for some degree of confrontation by, for example, producing masks. The organisers did no preparation of this sort on May Day, perhaps because the whole thing was organised by too few people in not enough time on about a tenth of the budget of June 18th, but perhaps also because it was not supposed to kick off.

Over the brief history of the direct action movement there has been a definite increase in both the militancy (in terms of the tactics we are prepared to use) and the radicalism (in terms of our ideas) of the movement. It has been suggested that at the moment that we are more radical but less militant than we used to be, and perhaps this is so. Certainly there has been a general shift away from single issue, liberal and reformist positions to more radical and revolutionary politics. May Day 2000 was an expression of this process and the point to which it has brought us. It is part of the whole general trajectory that youth counter-culture oriented political movements seem to follow.

To a certain extent there was a feeling of a release from pacifist repression. When some vague form of pacifism had been the orthodoxy, people



had to bottle up a lot of their feelings in order to conform, and you did get the feeling that as this pacifist orthodoxy evaporated, people were freed to 'come out' and express what they'd felt all along. This resulted in a certain exuberance and perhaps in people going a little bit too far in the opposite direction. After this process where the politics of the direct action movement have been becoming more radical it seems that there is a partial backlash and an attempt to re-assert 'fluffy', pacifist ideology (for example the new group Reclaim the Satyagrahal). There is this negative element to the attempt to plan a non-violent 'positive' event for May Day, but it's also more complex than that—this pendulum swing has taken place *within* individuals and many people are left in a contradictory state, trying to decide what are the most appropriate and useful forms of action at the present moment. Hopefully moving from one extreme to the other we will eventually find our correct point of equilibrium.

As part of this process of moving away from pacifist ideology, middle class activists stopped



policing their demos at the same time as they started producing propaganda going on about insurrection and revolution and upping the scale and attraction of these demos to young(er) people. Then with May Day the working/underclass youths and cider punks who had physically defended the spaces at previous events were no longer wanted by the RTS leaders. With the idea of policing the protest—through Seattle-esque 'guidelines'—having been thoroughly rejected at the EFi Winter Moot, it seems that it was decided to create a 'terrain of conflict' which would be conducive to a peaceful gardening action and unconducive to any violence. The flip side of choosing terrain for these reasons is that if anybody does fight with the cops they are automatically in a position of weakness thanks to a decision made by the organisers. Thus a mass of people were led into a conflict situation in probably the one space in Britain best planned for controlling public disorder, with few targets and no weapons or masks. RTS were acting as leaders. We might not like having leaders but if people do take on that role then they should seriously take on the responsibilities of that role. Leaders should either avoid taking people into conflicts they will lose or arm the people. At J18, RTS armed the people by taking them to a strategically good terrain and providing masks etc. On May Day RTS did not arm the people but used the terrain and the lack of props, masks and weapons to *disarm* the people. People—thanks in part to alcohol and to past RTS hype and revolutionary propaganda—still kicked off. At least twenty of them went to jail for it and the leaders made little or no effort to support these prisoners partly of *their* making.

The worries about a confrontation/riot at the event are complicated and should not be dismissed purely as bourgeois/pacifist rubbish (although a strong element of this was present) and at the same time we must be careful not to

fall prey to the ideology of riotism. The concerns seem to be made up of a number of factors. These included: worry about arrests/follow-up repercussions for the movement, media portrayal and the perceived wider alienation/marginalisation of 'us' from 'the public' (especially just as the new Terrorism Bill was being rushed through parliament), the strategic usefulness of street fighting in our wider revolutionary agenda as well as people's personal unwillingness to be beaten up and/or arrested.

Outside of my opinion as to these concerns, if they had any real weight then *there should not have been* a mass action in central London. It seemed obvious to all bar the organisers that it would *almost inevitably* end in some sort of riot or serious disorder. To think otherwise was naive. To think that a confrontation was likely and then to look for a way of defusing it is working for the cops.

Unfortunately, when people did engage in damage to property and fighting with the police, they were disowned by the organisers of the action...

## Crowd Control

Although Reclaim the Streets thankfully avoided condemning the violence of the May Day protests and falling into the most obvious trap of the state/media ideological machine, they did disown not only those who were involved in the violence but also all of those who were outside Parliament Square.<sup>9</sup> It can't have gone down too well with all of those trapped in Trafalgar Square by the police having their heads cracked to be told that they were "not part of the guerrilla gardening action". Presumably the aim of the people who made that statement was to point out to a media obsessed with violence that the guerrilla gardening action had taken place successfully as planned and to take a discreet 'no comment' on everything else that had taken place. However, it had the effect of making it sound like everyone who did not stay in Parliament Square was some sort of wrecker or hijacker who had simply turned up to cause trouble.

This particularly rankled because the organisers who held a press conference to disown everyone outside Parliament Square had produced a leaflet on the day entitled 'Essential Information to enhance your Guerrilla Gardening experience' which told people to: "follow the red flags when it's time to flow through the streets". The fatal combination of this leaflet with the fact that the action was a static action in which the meeting point was the location for the action, and that—duh!—it was *May Day* when there might perhaps be a few *other* red flags knocking around, lead probably the majority of those who had turned up for the action to follow

## Girls and Boys Come out to Play

Girls and boys come out to play—  
Reclaim the Streets is here today!  
Bring your spraycan  
and bring your brew  
And come and trash the Cenotaph  
in the name of all the working-  
class victims of capitalist war,  
then issue a pathetic press release  
refusing to accept any  
responsibility or condemn anyone  
no matter how crap they are.

Taken from *Just You Wait Till Wednesday...*  
a Collection of Anti-Anti-Capitalist Nursery  
Rhymes. Which you will probably have great  
difficulty obtaining anywhere.



some red flags and the samba band up Whitehall and into Trafalgar Square. It was very easy for the cops to seal off all the exits to Trafalgar Square and trap everyone inside it and so most of the people who came for the RTS guerrilla gardening action spent almost the whole day cordoned in Trafalgar Square being attacked and intimidated by huge numbers of riot police.<sup>10</sup>

One notable figure who did get himself on telly and all over the newspapers sharing his valuable opinions with us was Mark Lynas of *Corporate Watch*: "What happened on Monday will put the whole direct action movement back a long time, and put off peaceful people who would otherwise be involved. It is a tragedy that ordinary people will come away with the feeling that the May Day protest was being disrespectful to those who died in the world wars. That is not the case at all."<sup>11</sup> Fair comment, in one respect. But why is anyone any more interested in his opinion than in anyone else's? Because he can be quoted as Mark Lynas from *Corporate Watch*, which gives him some spurious authority—the media have found someone they can present as a 'leader' or representative, which then gives them the legitimisation to talk about 'splits in the movement'.

Even worse, all these mad rumours started flying around about how May Day was infiltrated by fascists. This is dangerous talk, and with no evidence to back it up, what it amounts to is people blabbing on about how there were fascists there just because someone had seen some people with football shirts and tattoos. Meaning someone saw some working class people who weren't obviously in our little counter-culture. This slight whiff of class bias in the air sits ill when you consider the class divisions that already exist within the movement—the people who organise things like May Day are in the majority from middle-class backgrounds and the people who get nicked and sent down for them are in the majority from working class backgrounds. You get the feeling that some people felt a bit like all these nasty rough kids had come and spoilt our nice hippy party.

Some people were also proposing that May Day was infiltrated by *agents provocateurs*, an idea that usually says more about the person proposing it than about anything that might actually have happened. Whenever

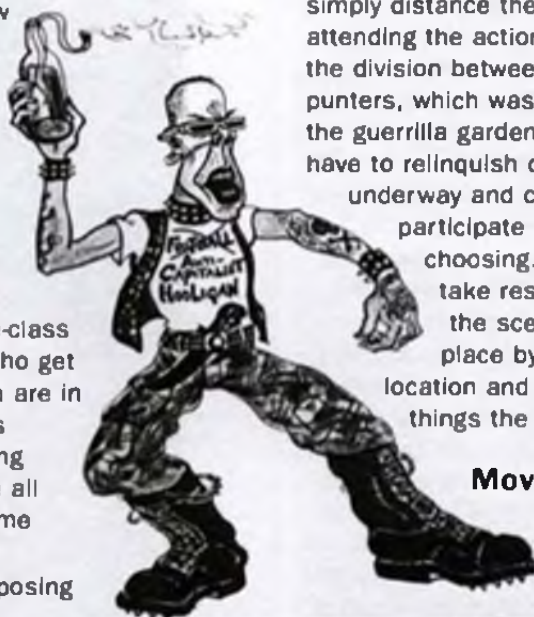
confrontation occurs that some people do not approve of, you hear the cries of '*provocateurs*'. Which, again, is dangerous talk—tempting us to start a witch hunt for anyone who engaged in any violence and then 'out' them as agents of the state. That is a very good way to start destroying your movement.<sup>12</sup>

The truth is that May Day was badly organised and ill thought out. Which is not necessary entirely the fault of the organisers, but is the truth nevertheless. On May Day there was nothing for most people to do. Even if all the people there had wanted to join in with the rather futile gardening stunt offered to them it wouldn't have been possible for them all to do so. The crowd which turned out on May Day was almost certainly of a similar composition to that which turned out on June 18th; the difference is in one instance they were let loose to smash up the City of London, and in the other there was nothing except war memorials.

An important lesson to learn from this is that you have to be prepared for big actions in London to kick off. If you are not able or willing to prepare for this then don't do the action. After November 30th, and the contrast between what happened in London and what happened in Seattle, some people have been arguing for the sort of 'action guidelines' that they had in Seattle—i.e. the organisers decide beforehand that there will be no 'violence' (however defined) on the action. Thankfully no one has actually done this, as it wouldn't stop any 'violence' happening, but would simply distance the organisers from those attending the action. If people want to break down the division between the organisers and the punters, which was one of the intentions behind the guerrilla gardening event, then the organisers have to relinquish control over the event once it is underway and can't get annoyed when people participate in a way that is not of their choosing. However, they can affect and take responsibility for the situation and the scenario in which the action takes place by choosing the most appropriate location and pre-planning and providing things the crowd might need.

## Movin' On Up

I don't want to belittle the time, emotional and physical energy and hard work that the organisers of the guerrilla gardening action put into the event under very difficult circumstances with not enough people helping in too short a time. Many of the problems with the action



*Did you see this man on May Day? No, neither did I. The Ecologist's view of the typical May Day demonstrator was, to say the least, somewhat of an exaggeration, considering what actually happened.<sup>13</sup>*



could quite probably have been solved simply by more people helping. Lots of the things wrong with the action were not the fault of the organisers, so the point is not to blame individuals but rather to ask ourselves as a movement—if the organisers did make mistakes, then how come we let them make mistakes, why didn't anyone correct them, or help them, or stop them? How did we get ourselves into a situation where it was possible for this to happen? And answering that question is much more difficult than simply finding someone to blame.

The political ideas behind the May Day action were good ideas, and fitted naturally into the sort of politics that RTS has been promoting for years: "We believe in... taking back those things which have been enclosed within capitalist circulation and returning them to collective use as a commons".<sup>14</sup> The problem wasn't that the action had no focus, as some were claiming—it had as much focus as many other things we do that are proclaimed successes. The problem was the gap between what sounded really good on paper and realising that in practice. The general political point behind this concept of guerrilla gardening had been thought through quite well, as could be seen in the RTS flyers advertising the action and in the spoof *Maybe* newspaper produced for May Day. However the whole thing was insufficiently worked out in terms of the practicalities and how it would actually take place. Perhaps the action shouldn't have been taken on if there weren't enough people to carry it out. But as has been explained, by some process that no one really understood, circumstances conspired such that a small group of people ended up having the responsibility for the whole thing dumped on them and ended up doing it without really thinking it through properly.

If the movement that May Day 2000 was a part of expands and becomes more successful, if this 'new anti-capitalist movement' that everyone is getting so excited about develops and grows, then the lessons to be learnt from the experience of May Day will become more valuable. Nothing inspires like success (and getting on the telly) and if we achieve this success then all the problems that have been identified with regard to May Day will recur on an increasing scale. We will get increasing attention from the police and the state. We will have to deal with the left in all its various guises. People will want to get involved and will turn up to our events who we don't like. Problems of communication, misunderstandings and clashes of different ways of working will become clear. We will have to work with people who share different backgrounds and want different things. Also the vitriol of the media and perhaps also of some of those who we might consider to be on our side will have to be dealt with.

We must learn how to cope with all of this. May Day was an example of one way of responding to and dealing with all the attention our movement was getting both positive and negative after June 18th and after Seattle. It turned out not to be a very good way of dealing with this. May Day was supposed to overcome some of the problems with these days of action and big London mass actions. It very largely didn't overcome any of them, and the attempt to do so only exacerbated the problems it was supposed to be solving. Recent events like N30 and May Day, in their attempts to *not be street parties* have simply ended up being bad street parties with no music. (At May Day I overheard several people saying: "when's the soundsystem turning up?" Had they not read the publicity? This was an event at which they were to be expected to WORK, digging and planting and so forth.) The attempt to not get pigeonholed as violent lunatics simply ended up in getting us pigeonholed as useless violent lunatic losers, which is quite the worst thing—to be trivialised and made to look like idiots. At least on J18 we looked like winners.

So if we are to carry on and push forward the struggle we need to develop ways to deal with these problems. The thing to do to respond to the danger of marginalisation and repression is not to start trying to control and police the crowds on





actions, but to both broaden your base of support and to build a strong movement capable of sustaining each other and carrying on despite repression. We need to have some sort of sustainable structure—an intergenerational counter-culture that can maintain itself over the years without dying a death when everyone hits 30 and forcing us to reinvent the wheel every 15 years. This will involve working with those not from our political generation and our little scene, which will be an awkward process, a learning curve, but a necessary one.★

## Notes

- 1) *New Statesman*, May 8 2000, p.8
- 2) For attempts to explain why it is that radical politics takes this form in terms of the post war social democratic class compromise see *Dole Autonomy versus the re-imposition of work: analysis of the current tendency to workfare in the UK* by Aufheben (Self published pamphlet, 1998), p.8 and *Aufheben* No. 8 (1999), p.1. See also the postscript 'Anarcho punk, the ALF and the miners' strike—a cautionary tale from the 1980s' in *Beasts of Burden: Capitalism Animals-Communism* (Antagonism Press, 1999)
- 3) Of course, needless to say, not everyone agreed to call it a day, and fairly swiftly after issue 73—supposedly the last ever *Class War*—came out, issue 74 appeared.
- 4) See *Do or Die* No. 8, pp.1-34
- 5) For example, the discussion document *Problems and Solutions... Mayday and beyond...* distributed at the Earth First! Winter Moot in January 2000, which attempted to warn people against letting May Day turn into another version of Euston saying, "for both the drunks and the police it must be fairly obvious that May 1st is now round 3".
- 6) See <http://website.lineone.net/~grandia/Mydy.htm> Please note as a general indication of the level of factual accuracy in this piece that contrary to the claim that *Do or Die* was "covertly bunged thousands of pounds by Chumba in an attempt to buy the direct action movement", *Do or Die* has never received any money from Chumbawamba (more's the pity!).
- 7) 'A Mayday Over May Day' by the Bash Street Kids in *Reflections on May Day*, p.4
- 8) See RTS' free spoof *Maybe* newspaper, pp.10, 11, 15. Also check out: <http://shadow.autone.net/> [www.green guerrillas.org](http://www.green guerrillas.org) [www.cityfarmer.org/mydestroy.html#mydestroy](http://www.cityfarmer.org/mydestroy.html#mydestroy) [www.primalseeds.org](http://www.primalseeds.org) and see *Avant Gardening: Ecological Struggle in the City & the World*, Edited by Peter Lamborn Wilson & Bill Weinberg (Autonomedia, ISBN 1570270929)
- 9) "Events that occurred outside Parliament Square were not part of the Guerrilla Gardening event" (RTS press statement, May 2nd 2000)
- 10) See the discussion document/rant *Guerrilla Gruesomeness* produced within RTS by one very unhappy participant: "Please don't shuffle this off again as 'just one of those things' and 'not our fault'. It was the fault of that fucking leaflet and whoever produced it. It was the fault of whoever conceived (or misconceived) a plan for a static action, but gave out misinformation so that people not in the know were encouraged to leave the action, unwittingly abandon the guerrilla gardening project, and move into danger and arrest around Trafalgar Square and the major political disaster at the Cenotaph, while they (unknown to those of us mugs who believed and acted on 'Essential Information') sat tight in Parliament Square having a nice time with their mates, and eventually got away relatively unscathed by arrest or injury."
- 11) *The Times*, May 3 2000, p.4
- 12) For example there was a leaflet produced entitled *Mayday McDonald's police entrapment?*, which raised the possibility of provocateurs and that leaving the McDonalds on Whitehall unguarded was a strategy of entrapment, as was leaving a cop van unguarded at the Euston N30 event. Contact Matthew Kalman c/o BM Open Eye, London WC1N 3XX, UK.
- 13) *The Ecologist*, Vol. 30, No. 4, June 2000, p.3
- 14) RTS agitprop. See: [www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

## Resources

### May Day 2001?

Check [www.freespeech.org/mayday2k](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k) for information about another possible event in 2001. Or write to: PO Box 2474, London N8 OHW, UK.

### Reflections on May Day

A4-size pamphlet of thoughts and opinions on May Day. Basically a re-run of the *Reflections on J18* pamphlet, except with worse politics. However, it has a couple of worthwhile things in it and is worth getting for that reason. Paper copy available for £1.50 from: PO Box 2474, London N8 OHW, UK.

Excerpts on-line at:  
[www.freespeech.org/mayday2k/reflect.htm](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k/reflect.htm)

### Mayday! Mayday!: Visions, Collisions and Reality

Very good 36 page A5 pamphlet produced by some people from the locations group responsible for the RTS guerrilla gardening action, explaining the process and the ideas that led to the action, what went right and what went wrong. Try getting a copy by asking very nicely and sending some money to Reclaim the Streets (see address in contacts section).

### Maybe

Newspaper produced for May Day by RTS spoofing London commuter freebie *Metro*. Covering the ideas behind guerrilla gardening, RTS, the ecological city and May Day. As above, try writing to Reclaim the Streets, asking nicely and sending some money.

### Legal Defence and Witnesses

The arrest and injury toll on May Day was heavy. More than a dozen people were hospitalised and there were around 95 arrests, some for serious charges. There have been more people arrested and sent down since then, and it is quite possible there are more to come. All these people deserve our full and unconditional support. See the prisoner section for details of May Day prisoners. Please contact the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group on 020 8245 2930 if you witnessed events, such as police violence, at J18, N30 or May Day whose reporting might help those arrested. Or write to: LDMG, c/o BM Haven, London, WC1N 3XX, UK.





O're the smooth enameld green, Where no print of step hath been, Follow me as I sing...  
Under the shady roof, Of branching Elm Star-proof, Follow me...  
—John Milton, from 'Arcades' (1645)



# BLACK AUTONOMY

## Civil Rights, the Panthers and Today

In May 2000 two anarchist ex-Black Panthers from America did a British speaking tour. Lorenzo KomBoa Ervin and JoNina Abron talked to groups ranging from white anarchists to mass black meetings on police racism. Between them they have 70 years of political activity spanning lives that have included everything from teaching at a revolutionary community school to hijacking a plane and taking it to Cuba. They conceded to being interviewed in sunny Brighton after a record buying spree (for their pirate radio station) to dazzle the gods. Both are now involved in the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organisers.

Perhaps you could tell us how you both got radicalised?

**JoNina** The thing that actually got me was the assassination of Martin Luther King in April of 1968. At that point I was at college. King was a civil rights leader and we all thought he was working through the system to change things. When he was assassinated, it really began to make me think. It was suddenly obvious the way he was going about things was not going to work.

Right after he was assassinated, I went with some other students to Zimbabwe—which was then still Rhodesia. I was very naive. I knew nothing about international capitalism or imperialism, nothing. Now I was so naive as to think that Africa was a continent that was controlled by African people. I got over to Zimbabwe and we were out in the countryside and I saw this sign saying Coca-Cola. So that was really the beginning for me to understand the role of the United States and Western imperialism. That was really the beginning—that was how I began to get involved.

**Lorenzo** In my case, it was the beginning of the student sit-ins in 1960. The sit-ins swept the South that year. I was ten years old at that time. It was Chattanooga round about in March when we had the demonstrations there against segregation. Black youth actually fought it out on the streets with the Ku Klux Klan and the white racist cops. The resistance was really widespread. For a young black kid at that time to see the entire community



*Bobby Hutton demonstrates the Panthers' patrolling the police programme. Hutton was the Panthers' first recruit and first martyr.*

rising up against these racists; that really affected me, radicalised me.

As a young kid I'd been humiliated in the South with racial segregation in terms of not being able to go to school with whites or enjoy the same kind of rights. Black people were subjected to any kind of abuse you can think of and certainly some beyond your level of thinking. I had a white kid spit in my face one time. 'Course I didn't stand there and take it—I was a real hothead in those days. But you could've been beaten and killed by a white racist in those days for standing up and resisting.

The people came, led by the youth, they challenged the white power structure, the years and years of abuse. The youth weren't controlled in any way, shape or fashion by the black or white adults. We were the ones that had the demonstrations, we were the ones that led the sit-ins, did the grassroots work, we were the ones



that *did*. When the 60s came along, kids as young as 10 or 11 got involved in that struggle, along with high school age kids. We shook that town up the way it's never been shook up before. We had the sit-ins—occupations of the premises of white racists: stores that wouldn't serve black people. We'd go in, demand to be served food, drinks or whatever. And, of course, they would ignore you or just outright tell you that they weren't going to serve you. "We don't serve niggers here." I remember one of the kids threw back the line—"Well, I didn't come to buy a nigger, I came to buy a hamburger!"

The sit-ins were the initial act of resistance that propelled the whole generation of student and youth protest. It went on all through those years of the 1960s into the 70s, including the Black Panther Party which was, in many ways, a transformation of the students and youth themselves as well as the movements that they were becoming part of. At first, the Student Non-

violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) was made up of all the groups of youths that had been involved in the earlier sit-in campaigns.

In my case, I couldn't serve as a travelling organiser; my mother wouldn't let me leave home at 10 or 11 years old and travel full time. But there were others a little older like Willy Rix who came from my home town. I really had a lot of respect for Willy Rix—he really influenced me. He's the individual who actually coined the slogan 'Black Power'. He was an organiser, a grassroots organiser. He didn't come from the middle class. Most of those SNCC youth organisers in that period were coming from middle class households, were privileged enough to go to college and all that stuff.

That was what really radicalised me, meeting Willy Rix, becoming part of that 1960 rebellion where all those black people just rose up, rose up in a mass against the police and the authorities. That radicalised me.

### **Lorenzo—Hijacker and Prison Activist**

**L** I was a member of the Chattanooga branch of the BPP. Various law enforcement agencies were obviously concerned to shut the BPP down, so they started fabricating charges against people. They could never get one against me. So, what they did was to call me a 'material witness' against another member of the BPP. They can hold 'material witnesses' for up to five years and this is what they said they were going to do to me. But there was no way they were going to get me...

#### **So what happened?**

**L** I hijacked a plane, and I took it to Cuba.

#### **Did you think it would be a safe haven?**

**L** A safer one, maybe. But that is where I found out about that sort of state socialism. People like to paint Cuba as a kind of paradise. Now obviously the embargo by the US has warped everything, but the Cubans didn't want the heat. For me, that was the start of realising the truth about state socialism and statist politics in general. But they kept me there for a while, then they packed me off to Czechoslovakia. And of course the Americans were hunting for me. It was the time of the uprisings in Prague and Dubcheck's government were inclined to be a little more helpful to the West. In the end it was the West Germans who found me, and a combination of things led to me being shipped off to Germany, and from there back to the US.

#### **And what happened?**

**L** I served 15 years.

#### **In what sort of conditions?**

**L** Maximum security a lot of the time. The hardest prisons they had to offer. You can imagine what that is like as a young man with the constant threat of being killed. There were plenty of white supremacists in jail would like to have killed me. Not to mention other people. I did nine years in solitary. 1969 to 1984 was the time I was in. I survived though. I did a lot of legal work for other prisoners, and eventually I had a few successes. Getting people off charges, telling them what they were entitled to under law. Advising a lot of prisoners. After that, they kept moving me so that I couldn't carry on telling people what their rights were. Not the sort of thing they want people to know of course. It was there that I read more about anarchist thought. One of the organisations that supported me through my term was the Anarchist Black Cross, from Amsterdam. But I guess, looking back now, the changes were centred around the ideas of leadership and the cadre movement within the BPP. Having seen state socialism, as it's called, at work, it wasn't the best... I dunno...

**State socialism being Capitalism B and capitalism being Capitalism A. The same system, basically, just two different versions. That sort of thing?**

**L** I guess that's a good way of putting it.

*Taken from the really rather spiffy YearZero Issue 3, £1.50 from:*

*YearZero, PO Box 26276, London W3 7GQ, UK.*

*Web: <http://members.freespeech.org/yearzero>*

*Email: [yearzero@flashmail.com](mailto:yearzero@flashmail.com)*



## The Birth of Black Power

**Could you tell us about the birth of the Black Panther Party (BPP)?**

**J** The Party was started in 1966. It was part of the whole Black Power thing. It was just one of many Black Power groups.

**Was it a seamless transition, or was the emergence of the Black Power movement a reaction to some of the earlier stuff?**

**L** No, it was very much competition between old and new forces. King had a group called the Southern Christian Leadership Congress. There was another group, ACT and the Congress for Racial Equality. All those groups at that time were in opposition to Black Power. Certainly King. He was shocked by it. There was a confrontation that occurred in the June 1966 march through Mississippi. That was the one where 'Black Power' the concept was made public. It was a march with all the factions—one of the few times in the Civil Rights movement when all the factions had come together. There was a great deal of resentment and fear on the part of King about the Black Power movement and the youth. King and his organisation had always been in conflict and competition with the youth. At any rate, that so-called 'March against Fear' in Mississippi is where the confrontation between Stokely Carmichael (who was at that time the chair of SNCC) and Dr. Martin Luther King became direct.

King would get up and speak, as he would, used to call for Federal intervention and talking about voting rights and all that—which was, by then, passé. Willy Rix worked with SNCC, under Stokely actually. And he told him, "Man, the people in the streets are ready for Black Power, every time I say 'Black Power' they go holler and scream". Anyway, so Stokely he got arrested the previous night. He was angry and he came out and gave a speech. King had just spoken. And he got up and just said, "You know, I'm just damned tired of this, I've been arrested too many damned times for this. Every time I show my face in Mississippi these damned cops just arrest me." He said "You know, we need to get our hands on some political power, we need some Black Power." All the people started screaming "Black Power! Black Power!" And it shocked the shit out of the white press, it shocked the whole Civil Rights leadership. It really shocked the hell out of them. King was lost for words. He didn't know what the hell was going on. Black Power came into existence, at least the public image of it—at that moment. And then shortly after that, in 67, was when Rix, Stokely and some others then became part of the Black Panther Party. Because Huey Newton [primary leader of the BPP] wanted a merger between the Panthers and the much larger SNCC. The merger wasn't



*Brothers and sisters, get off your knees!  
King's people pray while the Panthers prow!*

seamless at all. There were all sorts of forces inside each organisation that didn't trust the other.

**What sort of relationship was there between the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement and the more traditional left?**

**J** It depends. There were some Black Power groups that were extremely nationalistic and they did not want to work with white people at all. The Panthers were severely criticised by many black groups because we did work with white radicals. They didn't want anything to do with it. So it depended upon what group you were in. Some like the Panthers worked closely with white radicals, others—if you had a white skin, as far as they were concerned you were all devils. Of course the debate still continues today. There are many black activists today who still do not want to work with whites. They don't care how radical they are, they don't see the importance of building a coalition, a united front. It will be an ongoing argument. I'm sure it'll be here, you know, in 300 years. We'll be long buried in the ground and there will be arguing still.

## The Panthers & The White Left

**What was the reaction of the left to the emergence of the Panthers?**

**L** Well the white left, certainly the Communist Party, was absolutely opposed to any form of what they called 'narrow black nationalism', and they lumped together everything from SNCC (after the whites left) to Malcolm X and the Panthers. They





were not in favour of any black political formations. This carried on for quite some time. It was in fact anti-black in our opinion.

But then there were the other major organisations. The Socialist Workers' Party of the United States (not connected with the SWP here in the UK), it had been influenced by Malcolm X. He had spoken at some of their meetings and he was very influential at that time, not only with black people but with a lot of white youth as well. He understood that if there were whites who would put themselves on the line and take some of the risk and would follow black leadership, then he could work with them. That was his position. Of course, that was an extremely radical and controversial position. Certainly for someone who had come out of a really dogmatic Black Nationalist organisation. So the SWP was very much in favour of what he was saying. Also they recognised his popularity—there was a certain measure of opportunism there. He was a very popular figure. He was a worldwide

spokesperson for black causes, so from their estimation, they could attach their cause to his star somehow.

Then there was a broader organisation—the new groups that came out of the New Left. And the New Left was more contiguous around the time of the Black Panther Party. They had a love-hate relationship with the Black Panther Party. Some elements of the New Left were very much in favour of the Panthers and had been in coalitions.

**J** The SDS—the Students for a Democratic Society.

**L** Yeah, which was really influenced more by SNCC. It actually came into existence partly as an organisation of some white members of SNCC, you know, after they left that organisation. But that organisation, which was broad-based, had all kinds of political tendencies in it.

Many of the so-called hippies were non-political but some weren't—even selling the Black Panther newspaper. I was coming from the South with Rix to deal with the two Black Panther coalitions and there's this white guy selling the newspaper. A Californian hippie selling the newspaper, the Black Panther newspaper.

**J** Very popular paper.

**L** A lot of people were selling it, all kinds of folks. 'Course that really angered the black nationalists. They thought, "they're selling out to these whites, they're under the control of these white radicals". Even today they'll accuse you of that. Historically there has been some opportunism, so there is some legitimate sentiment, but most of the time it's just dogmatism. Certainly the white left has not been as supportive as it should be. When the Black Panther Party was being destroyed they did nothing! What do you say?

**J** They did very little. Of course in all fairness we could say there was a Counter-Intelligence Programme against the New Left too. The FBI also went in and destroyed a lot of the New Left organisations as well.

**L** Specially ones that supported the Black Panther Party. Many of the white organisations that are still around were at that time as well. Their thing was just to stand back and see the government come in, destroy the Black Power groups and then swoop in and try and get their members. That was really one of the most treacherous things I can think of.

**You mentioned there was a point at which a lot of the white members left SNCC. What was that about?**

**L** Well, starting around 64, after the success and failure of using white students in Mississippi on the campaign called 'Freedom Summer'—it was a large campaign, brought in 1,000 white students to work in Mississippi. The idea being that whites



would not receive the same level of oppression that black people had. Of course, that was not necessarily true. Some were murdered. Eventually it came up in terms of the Black Power movement, the Black Power sentiment in the black community. The Southern struggle had changed from democratic rights. The relationship had changed between black and white organisers. The necessity of having white organisers working in white communities was an issue. Beyond that, certain members just felt that all whites, generally, should be removed from the organisation. That caused a real painful battle on the inside. I think that was one of the things that killed it off. I have to say that many of the things that the Black Power movement raised were certainly legitimate questions; about black people having their own political agenda and organising, especially in the inner cities.

**J** The Black Power movement was a more urbanised movement.

**L** The older movement had a lot of adults in it as leaders and so forth—it had a lot of youth too, but what SNCC used to do is go in areas and it would recruit people to build their own movements. It didn't send people to stay. The purpose of an organiser was to go in, stir up interest, get black people around specific campaigns, bring out indigenous leadership and then get the hell on out of there. Go to the next place.

These older people who led these autonomous movements in the South at that time were shunted out of the way. Younger people were leaving these areas and going to the cities in the South—Memphis, New Orleans, Montgomery, Birmingham—cities of considerable size. They weren't confronted with share-cropping and tenant farming—those weren't issues there. It was a different dynamic. I think that was one of the things that led to the Black Power movement and the debates and, ultimately, whites being removed from organisations.

I won't lie to you, but even to this day, I don't go to reunions of SNCC or the BPP. Well, the BPP has never settled issues. I don't go to reunions because I don't want to relive all that stuff again. That stuff is still very much alive for some people, they're very sectarian. It's alive, and it's a fresh open wound. I don't see the utility of that. I think what we need to be trying to do—those of us that have some knowledge and who still have the energy—should concentrate on building new movements and that alone.

## **The Panthers Merge With SNCC**

**Tell us about your involvement in the Panthers.**

**L** I went in with the merger. This is a curious situation, it's one of the few times, historically in the black struggle, where members of one

organisation were drafted (in the word used at that time) into a new smaller organisation that had just been in existence maybe not even a year. Huey Newton understood what he had in terms of his own forces—young and inexperienced organisers, 'brothers off the block'. SNCC was an organisation that had trained organisers and a method of struggle. Believe you me, through the years we've learned if you've got trained organisers you can do a helluva lot more than if you've got someone who just walks in off the street—you know you've borne a lot more mistakes, and they're disciplined. Anyway, he wanted to bring in the SNCC organisers and he thought the way to do that was to recruit the three main leaders—Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown and James Foreman. Stokely was the Field Marshall. Then H. Rap Brown was Minister of Justice and Foreman was Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Immediately from the inside of SNCC there was a firestorm of resistance, because all those guys inside SNCC had factions of support. Many raised questions about the idea of going into the BPP. They were saying, "Nobody consulted us! We didn't vote on this matter! This is undemocratic". What this did was really tie the tail of Stokely Carmichael because he was chairman. People said, "This guy is just taking powers in a way that SNCC has never done before". Up until that point SNCC had always been an anti-authoritarian organisation. In fact, at one stage, in the early-mid 60s, Paul Goodman [editor of the anarchist mag *The Liberator*] actually called it an anarchist organisation. They had never had any kind of strong leadership and central committee until he got in power. So it was already rumbling about that—when he came into office he brought in a central committee and then he goes into the Black Panther Party—"What the hell is going on?" Inside the Black Panther Party there were those that were afraid that because SNCC was a large organisation it would take over. So there was all this tension in both these organisations and that had a lot to do with what happened to me when I came in. It was in the middle of that, coming out of SNCC, that I went into the BPP. And I was in the South where the BPP didn't have any bases, many chapters or anything. It was a kinda really hairy situation.

**J** And the merger didn't last long. On the one hand there were personality problems, but of course the government were intent upon it not lasting. They did all they could do to sow discord. If they had been able to stay together it would have been powerful. With the talent and experience of the SNCC organisers and then with what the BPP had accomplished in its short period of existence. But it didn't last long.

**L** What's so amazing is that Newton understood it. Nobody understood it—even the guys he drafted





*Huey Newton in Revolutionary Suicide describes how police officers handcuffed him to a trolley and beat him after he had been critically wounded in the abdomen. When he spat blood on them, they covered his face with a towel, and beat him some more. Huey wrote that a young Dr. Finch committed suicide after Huey's first trial. His conscience would give him no peace after his treatment of Huey in the emergency room.*

pushing the 'Free Huey' movement, because the politics of the Black Panther Party was made known to millions of people. That's no exaggeration whatsoever. Millions of people worldwide heard of the BPP who wouldn't have otherwise. And it

pushed it way beyond the stage when it started; just one of a number of Black Power organisations. It pushed it to the front, the very front.

**J** After Huey was shot and put in prison, that's when the membership really began to swell. Because of the 'Free Huey' campaign and word got out, you know, about this. So the membership grew, and grew rather quickly. It had been a very small group and then it started spreading to all of the major cities of the United States, and a lot of that had to do with what happened after Huey was shot. Incidentally, the police tried to kill him and frame him in October 1967.

In the Summer of 1967 the government set up a Counter-Intelligence Programme to destroy the Black Power movement. The Director of the FBI, the domestic secret police of the United States, ordered all his secret agents around the country to do all they could to disrupt and destroy what he called the Black Nationalist movements—in essence, the Black Power movement. He issued the initial memo in August 67 and the BPP was not included. By 1968, because of the 'Free Huey' movement, the BPP was added. J. Edgar Hoover, then head of the FBI said, "The Black Panther Party represents the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States." We didn't have that many people—there was really no way! But the reason he did that was that the word had begun to spread about the Party, so it too became a target.

in. They didn't understand what he saw in terms of what the government and police were going to do. They did exactly what he had suspected, they moved in on him. He was shot and almost killed after that. If it hadn't been for the merger there would not have been anyone to take the organisation over at that time. People don't like to admit that at this late date, but it's true.

**J** Kathleen Cleaver was one of the people who played a really important role in Huey's defence after he had been shot and set up by the police, accused of killing a cop and severely wounding another, whilst he himself was seriously injured. Kathleen came out of SNCC herself, so she was an experienced organiser. She was able to take charge of that campaign and make it into an international campaign. If she hadn't, Huey might have spent many years in prison. She could do it because she was an experienced SNCC organiser before she had joined the BPP.

**L** Exactly. You could not overstate the importance of having SNCC at that stage, of Kathleen Cleaver



## **A Brief Panther Chronology 1966**

October 15: Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale collaborate on a draft of the Black Panther Party 10-

Point Program and Platform, and found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence.

## **1967**

January 1: BPP opens first official headquarters in a storefront on 56th and Grove Streets in Oakland, California, and begin holding political education meetings.

February 21: Two years after the assassination of

Malcom X, his widow Betty Shabazz visits the San Francisco Bay area. The Panthers, providing security for Shabazz, are accosted by the police who insist on disarming them. Panthers cite their constitutional rights to bear arms, and the police make no arrests. The instance is a source of favourable publicity for the Panthers.

April 27: First Issue of *Black Panther*—*Black Community News* is published. The murder of Denzell Dowell by the police is the lead story. BPP organises protests and garners more acclaim.

May 21: BPP members show up at the State Capitol in Sacramento bearing arms. Bobby Seale



## **So their attempts to frame Huey Newton backfired on them?**

**J** Yeah, the name became quite well known, especially by the poor youth in the United States and overseas. Panther leaders would come to Europe... I know they spent a lot of time in places like Norway and Sweden.

**L** In fact there were Black Panther Solidarity Groups all over Europe. Most importantly, there were seven autonomous BPP organisations internationally. You had a Black Panther Party in India, a Black Panther Party among the so-called Black Jews, you know—the Asiatic and African Jews of Israel. You had a Black Panther Party in the UK led by Michael X among other leaders. You had the Aboriginal Black Panther Party in Australia. So the BPP was an organisation that was having a tremendous impact, both inside and outside the United States. People fell into two camps, they loved it or they hated it, there was no in between.

**J** At the conference in London the other day [Mayday 2000], we met a woman who had been in the Black Panther Party in the UK.

## **Learn From The Past**

**Do you have any thoughts on mistakes made by the Black Panther Party and what can be learnt from them?**

**J** Where shall we start?!

**L** I would start at the structure of the organisation. One of the things that always sticks out in my mind is how the BPP failed in terms of the leadership question. The leadership was not accountable to the membership. After it became obvious that Huey Newton was clearly disabled [to put it kindly—suffering from mental paranoia not helped by heavy amounts of cocaine and an overdose of power] we weren't able to remove him.

I think this whole question of cadre organisations as opposed to broad based structures—cadres are just the arms and eyes and ears of the leadership of the structures.

Organisations should be broader based; based in and controlled by the community. I guess I'm more in favour of some of the SNCC politics. If you could merge the two and have a broad based organisation with a politically focused and militant stand I think that you've got a chance to build a mass movement and stave off repression.

Clearly having a tight organisation didn't stave off repression in the BPP. Part of the reason it didn't is because of the leadership. I mean, I can't lay everything at the leadership, we didn't carry our role in terms of challenging as a body what we saw was clearly wrong and was harming the organisation. That's all really painful to look at. And I really loved Huey Newton and everything, at that period, more than anyone. Still do to some extent. But there were many mistakes made.

What happens to the masses of people is more important than any organisation. That was a lesson that was hard to learn. I was told that by Martin Salisbury, who was never in the BPP but was a black militant at the time and later was an important political prisoner. He was the one that said, "You know, organisations come and go, but the people are always there and the people are our promise." Now he was in the Young Lords organisation at one point, when he got out of prison, because he was a black Puerto Rican. The point he's making as I understand it—and I thought about it for years and years afterwards—is that these organisations are not meant to live permanently, they're simply tools to get liberation. It's the masses that have to move, not the political party. Then there were things with women. There were always women in the organisation. The Panthers were much more in advance, in fact, than most of the organisations of the day. That's something no one wants to admit. When they criticise the BPP, they're criticising, at that stage, the most advanced organisation. They were the first ones to come out in favour of the gay revolution. There were no other black organisations who did that. In fact I don't think many still have.

reads "Executive Mandate #1", written by Newton and addressing the right to bear arms.

June 29: Stokely Carmichael, former chair of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), is drafted into the BPP and given the rank of Field Marshall.

October 28: Huey Newton is returning home from a party celebrating the end of his parole when he and another Panther are stopped by the police. A shootout erupts and Officer John Frey is killed. Newton and another officer are wounded. No gun was found on Newton, who was later arrested and charged with murder and attempted murder.

## **1968**

February 17-18: Two large 'Free Huey' rallies feature James Foreman, H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael as speakers. Each is given a position in the Party to help seal an alliance between the BPP and SNCC.

March 4: FBI secret memos direct Bureau offices to "prevent the coalition of militant Black Nationalist groups" and "to prevent the rise of a Black 'Messiah' who would unify and electrify the Black Nationalist community."

April 4: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated, and the BPP appeals for calm in Oakland. While



*One of the Panthers' most famous community survival initiatives was the 'Free Breakfasts for Children Programme'. At one point the Panthers across the country were feeding an estimated 10,000 kids. Jesse Andrews, the Treasurer of the State of California, went so far as to say the Panthers were feeding more children than the US Government. Hoover described it as the most subversive of all Panther programmes and sent his FBI out to sabotage it.*



if you look at them in comparison to the black movement organisations and the Civil Rights organisations... you know they were head and shoulders above it. Dr. King's organisation had a terrible reputation for sexism and womanising. Now SNCC had the best reputation over the roles women had, especially in the late stages.

**J** There was a struggle within SNCC too, about that whole question. About female leadership. All the organisations went through it at some time.

**L** So I think those areas are important. But in my estimation because they had a broad based organisation with community support they could have resisted. I believe, I've always believed, that they could have resisted the pressure. What do you think?

**J** Well, yeah, I think if the structure had been different. I also think look at the state repression, what was done to destroy the organisation. We did not understand how much repression we were going to get by telling the black community it

**J** Well, of course, there were a lot of black organisations that were against gay rights...

**L** ...and against Women's Liberation. So they made a number of mistakes there. But you have to look at that within the context of the time. So I think really, in my mind, that was less of a problem. I'm not minimising... I'm sure you wouldn't allow me to do that—no way! Women were not common enough in leadership roles, but

should defend itself against the power structure. Even with our community survival programmes. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, at one point he said that out of all our activity our 'Breakfast Programme' was the most subversive.

Subversive! We were feeding kids! J. Edgar Hoover was a racist, but he wasn't crazy. He understood the power of what we were doing in terms of radicals feeding hungry children. That was

there are no major disturbances, many people appear at the Panther headquarters requesting guns.

April 6: Li'l Bobby Hutton, the BPP's first recruit, is slain by the police following a shootout. Eldridge Cleaver is wounded, arrested and jailed for parole violation. Other Panthers at the incident are charged with attempted murder.

July 15: Huey Newton's trial begins at Alameda County Courthouse. Hundreds of people ring the courthouse and the trial receives worldwide attention.

September 28: Huey Newton is sentenced to 2-

15 years in prison. Police officers, incensed by the outcome of the trial, shoot out the windows of the Panther headquarters and nearby apartment buildings. No charges are brought against them by Police Chief Darryl Gates.

November 25: Memo from the FBI discloses COINTELPRO plan to create dissension between Panthers and Ron Karenga's US (United Slaves) group. These furtive acts would later precipitate violent confrontations between the groups.

**1969**

January 17: Alprentice 'Bunchy' Carter and John Huggins, leaders of the BPP Southern California



a really dangerous programme, and that was one of the programmes that the FBI went out to sabotage. [At its height the BPP Breakfast Programme fed 10,000 kids a day.]

We did not have a complete understanding of what scale of confrontation we were entering with the state at that stage already. We had these *agents provocateurs* sent in to disrupt us. We'd let anybody walk in off the street to join, so in came these infiltrators and paid informants. I think that was one of our main errors. We were young, we were basically kids, we didn't know. That just made it easier for the Counter-Intelligence Programme to destroy us. I think that in the present day and time you have to do a lot more in terms of assessing people when they come to join you.

**L** I think you're right—they were young people, they weren't trained as leaders of these organisations, they went into these roles, they made many mistakes. Every mistake that they made the government would seize upon and use to weaken the organisation. That's what they did over the course of time.

Now, if there had been more tested leadership, if there had been, certainly, a membership base that demanded more accountability, you know—if, if, if,—perhaps the organisation would still be alive and around today. You know it may have had a different history. We might have been at a different stage of struggle in the United States, by this time have had a civil war, a revolution—who knows!

Certainly, the political times were charged enough to *realistically* look at that. You know, it wasn't just something in somebody's head, we weren't totally deluded. I think the

realistic prospects for revolution at that time were clear.

## How to Avoid Repression

From the extreme experiences that you and your organisation have been through, what do you think is the best way to deal with this problem of infiltration? I understand that the attempts to deal with it within the Black Panther Party led to so much in-fighting and recrimination that that, in itself, split the organisation as much as the infiltration.

**J** It split our organisation in two. It split us.

**L** I think, accountability within the organisation. So that if someone is saying something or someone is doing something then there has to be some procedure in place to make them come forward and make it public to the entire membership of an organisation or chapter. So that there won't be this backbiting. That garbage leads to a lot of difficulties, leads to personal and political conflict later on.

That's one thing there should be some method in place so that if there's a conflict or something it can be made public. So these people don't worm their way in. Also there has to be some kind of procedure so that you know a very basic thing—that is to know who's in and who's out of the organisation. People will come up and say they're part of this and that and they'll set up an organisation or chapter, and you won't even know who the hell they are or what their real intentions are. That's a very simple thing to prevent. I've seen organisations where



chapter, are gunned down on the UCLA campus by members of US. These murders coincided with raids on several BPP offices in the Los Angeles area.

April 2: Twenty-one Panthers in New York City are arrested for allegedly conspiring to bomb local department stores. They are held on \$100,000 bail.

July 18-21: Panthers sponsor a highly successful United Front Against Fascism in Oakland. A number of organisations, including the Young Lords, Young Patriots, Students for A Democratic Society, Republic of New Afrika, SNCC, and the

Red Guard participate.

December 4: Charismatic Panther leader Fred Hampton and Mark Clark are murdered in Chicago by the police. Hampton was noted for his dynamic speaking ability and organising skills in the Chicago area. Most troubling to the police was the alliance he was developing between the Panthers and the city's notorious gangs.

## 1970

April: Panthers receive international support: solidarity committees from France, Denmark, Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany and Sweden convene in Frankfurt.





*The body of leading Black Panther Fred Hampton lies sprawled in the doorway of his bedroom. Hampton had been drugged by his bodyguard (an FBI infiltrator), wounded in his sleep by FBI gunfire, executed by two close-range bullets in the head and dragged to the doorway by his wrist. His pregnant fiancée who was in bed next to him was also shot. She survived and later gave birth to Fred Hampton Jr. He, like his father before him, tried to negotiate gang truces and get black youth to turn on their oppressors not each other. He was framed by the FBI and is now in jail.*

**Contact: Fred Hampton Uhuru House, 5409 S. Halsted Street, Chicago, IL 60609, USA.**

someone's just come along and started a chapter and nobody's ever seen them in their life! That's very dangerous. Infiltration and disruption of movements—they've done it to various generations of activists. You pointed out it happened to the Panthers, but it also happened to EF! Certainly US West coast EF!

[Ed. note: In May of 1990, EF! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney were on their way to an

organising meeting for the Redwood Summer forest blockades when a bomb exploded in Bari's car. The FBI subsequently tried to frame them for their own attempted assassinations. Strangely in charge of their case was the FBI's Richard Held—already notorious for his involvement in COINTELPRO against the Panthers, the American Indian Movement and others. This bombing came at a time of ferocious attack on a number of EF! groups around the US, including the infamous Arizona case where EF!ers were set up by an FBI *agent provocateur*, EF! co-founder and editor of *Ecodefence*, Dave Foreman, was also heavily targeted. Judi Bari, who had been crippled by the bomb, died last year.]

They singled out individuals they felt had potential as leaders, or as major activists, and they sowed discord among that group. The Bari bombing was meant not only to kill or maim the activists, it was also meant to create conflict and confusion amongst activists, so that they would think somebody else was responsible for it. It really did do some of that. It split certain people, it created doubts and suspicion—even after they found out that the FBI was involved in the bombing.

So, I think what is really important is to have accountability within the organisation. Have broad based coalitions that are accountable to the community as well as to the masses in the organisation itself.

I think one of the weaknesses of this idea that if you create this tightly structured organisation you resist political penetration—that comes out of the Leninist politics—I think it was proven with the Panthers and others that that's not necessarily the case. It's much more possible to isolate you and just destroy you. You don't have any assurances just because you've got an organisation, a supposedly tight leadership and this, that and the other, that you're safe. No, they can come in. Even though it had the appearance of a tight organisation people could come in and set up chapters! Can go from one place to another.

**May 1:** A massive rally is staged on New Haven Green to gather support for Lonnie McCluskey, Bobby Seale and Erika Huggins, all of whom are facing trial.

**July 25:** Panther office in Omaha, Nebraska, closes after being bombed.

**August 5:** After three years in prison, Huey Newton wins an appeal and is released.

**August 7:** Seeking to liberate his brother George, Jonathan Jackson, 16, apprehends a judge and other hostages in a daring raid on a courtroom in Marin County. He provides weapons for Ruchell Magee, William Christmas and James McClain,

who at the time are on trial. They make their escape in a van, but are fired on immediately by the police. Jackson, McClain, Christmas and the judge are killed in the gun battle.

**September 3:** Black Panther Party opens International section in Algeria under the aegis of Eldridge Cleaver.

**November 7:** Southern California chapter Free Breakfast Programme serves over 1,700 meals per week.

**December 4-5:** Panthers convene Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Washington, DC.



This is what George Sams [FBI Infiltrator] did. He came, he said, from Oakland to Connecticut on orders from the leadership. People were afraid to even question him. Because, you know, "Well, I'll get in trouble with the leadership". So he was able to lay around there and harass people and set people up. He set somebody up to be killed and another two or three people to be charged with murder.

If there are contradictions inside the organisation, air them; they cannot be allowed to fester. You have to make it a policy—you've something to say about somebody, bring it forward and make it public. And then if that person continues to do that then they have to be expelled.

**J** Also, just to have more democratic procedures.

**L** Yeah, that is part of it. You've got to have democratic procedures, but you've also got to have the ability to get rid of these people when you find that you do have enemy agents. You know, because some people will say, "You're expelling this person. Why, he's a good person. I've seen him doing..." You have to explain to them why you do it. You have to have procedures in place to do this. I mean, it's not a chore that's pleasurable.

**J** But, you know, in the Black Panther Party you could be expelled. One week you may be a really loyal, faithful member of the Party thinking you're doing a really good job and two weeks later you could see your picture on the front of the Panther paper saying "Expelled for life. Enemy of the people". There might have been some cases when in fact these people were, in fact agents, but they were not government agents all the time.

**L** I think there's some things that are just basic to organisation: be sure everything's done above board, be sure you've got accountability in the organisation, be sure you've got basic unity and mutual respect. You know some of these things are pretty obvious. There are going to be people coming in with bad blood and, to be quite honest, there's going to be conflict, but there has to be a method that you've created inside your

organisation that can diffuse certain kinds of conflict. Otherwise you've got serious problems. Serious problems. It will split you right down the middle and if it doesn't do that, it will crush your organisation.

**J** What we need to do is not make the same mistakes we made. People are going to make mistakes, because we're human. But there's no point in us doing the same things that we know failed before.

**L** And deadly errors. Those kind of errors don't just result in some bad blood or something, but actually result in people getting killed or the organisation being crippled. Those things must be avoided.

**J** We had some fratricide in the Black Panther Party. We were killing each other. That's one major reason why some animosity remains among some former Panthers. A lot of folks don't want to talk about it, but it happened. We have to acknowledge it and figure out how not to ever do that type of thing again.

## Life in the Panthers

**I wonder Lorenzo if you could talk about your experience in the Black Panther Party and what led to your imprisonment. And JoNina, your experience with being editor of a newspaper and being involved with it as a process when the Black Panther Party was in decline.**

**J** I joined in Detroit, Michigan, in the second Detroit Panther chapter. The first one created in 69/70 was destroyed by the FBI Counter-Intelligence Programme. It was rebuilt around 1972. My basic work there was in the Free Hot Breakfasts for Children. I was also one of the drivers in the Panther 'Free Busing to Prison Programme'. Many black people or poor working class whites, they got involved in crime and they were sent to State prison. These State prisons were always far away from the cities and if your families didn't have transportation they couldn't visit you. That was the only thing you may have to

## 1971

January 16: Panthers establish a legal assistance programme in Toledo, Ohio, with 24-hour hotline and free lawyer services. Chicago Panthers provide door to door check-ups and preventative health care information.

April: Panther militants forced 'underground', leading to the subsequent emergence of the Black Liberation Army.

April 10: BPP initiates nation-wide campaign to research and eradicate Sickle Cell Anaemia, a deadly hereditary disease that affects black people.

May: Panther 21 trial ends after 26 months; all are acquitted, including Michael 'Catawago' Tabor, Dhoruba Moore and Edward Joseph Jamal in absentia.

July 23: Former Panther, Michael 'Cotton' Smith, testifying for the prosecution, admits he is a long-time undercover agent during the trial of the LA 18.

August 21: George Jackson, author of *Soledad Brother* and a BPP Field Marshall, is assassinated at San Quentin Prison during a so-called escape attempt. Jackson is shot down while running across the prison yard.



help you get through imprisonment. We'd take the family members—girlfriends, friends, wives, children, whatever—of the people who were incarcerated, so that they could go up and visit their relatives. And of course along with that, selling the newspaper.

In early 74, I and the rest of the chapter left Detroit and relocated to HQ in Oakland. Across the country many of the chapters disbanded in the local cities because we got to the point where we could no longer sustain all these chapters in all these cities, so they came to Oakland. Some people think that was a mistake and that we might have lasted longer as an organisation if we hadn't.

In Oakland we had this really bad tenement, a really bad slum. The owner had written a book called *How I made a Million Dollars Without Really Trying*. Part of that was he just ran all this slum housing. Someone who lived in one of the buildings contacted the BPP. They wanted to organise a tenants' union because they were tired of paying rent. They had roaches, nothing was fixed, the elevators didn't work, there were mice and everything. They needed help.



So the Party sent me in to help organise a tenants' union and it got some changes. Lorenzo talks about SNCC and the Black Panther Party being organisations of organisers—that's what we were. That was one of the best experiences I had in the Party actually. Being able to go in and provide assistance. When they had a really tightly organised tenants' union and they pretty much knew what they wanted to do, that's when I stopped going. That's what we did—helped people organise themselves.

After a while in Oakland I worked on the Panther newspaper, which covered not only events that the BPP was involved in, but also community news. In March of 78 I became editor all up until September 80. By the time I became editor we were a very small organisation, we didn't have many people left. In that role I represented the Party in a lot of coalitions with other organisations.

I also taught at the Party's school. I taught Language Arts—what you'd call reading, spelling and writing. I would sometimes stay up half the night working on the newspaper, sleep a few hours, get up and then take the bus down the street to

the school—teach the children for half a day. The school was considered a model elementary to the point that in the late 70s we actually got an award from the government of California, saying that we were the State Legislature Model Elementary School. Other schools around the country that were trying to have alternative education kinda' looked at our model. We never had a very big school because we didn't have the resources. We wrote our own curriculum and I helped to write the Language Arts portion of it. So I had a lot of really wonderful experiences in the Party and I still consider what I'm doing today as a

#### 1972-1974

After being released from prison the previous year Huey Newton transforms the party largely into a personal vehicle. He forcefully disbands many groups across the country and relocates favoured leading activists to Oakland. This on top of the massive state repression of the previous years starts to turn the BPP into a local Oakland phenomenon and no longer a national/global movement.

#### 1974

Addled by drug addiction and paranoia Newton goes into exile in Cuba to avoid prosecution for

the beating to death of a female bar room customer. Elaine Brown takes over as Chair of the BPP, by now a shadow of its former self.

#### 1982

The last BPP survival programme, the Oakland Community Learning Centre, closes its doors.

#### 1989

August 22: Newton is killed in a drug dispute on the streets of Oakland, not far from the site where he and Seale founded the BPP. Tyrone Robinson, member of the Black Guerrilla Family, is arrested for the killing.★



continuation of that, even though obviously we can't do it the same way. There may not be a formal Black Panther Party in existence any more, but I'm still a Panther. I'll die one. It's interesting that's still near to my heart.

**L** By the time the Black Panther Party came along I'd already been an activist in the South for some time. Then I saw this much more militant new organisation which certainly had a practical political platform in terms of Black Liberation NOW! As a youth I had been brutalised a number of times by the police. We used to have a group of cops in Tennessee called the Black Head Breakers. This idea of fighting against police brutality—I was really excited by that.

The Panther Party didn't really get to the South, in terms of branches, until the early 1970s. In Chattanooga we didn't have a Panther chapter until after I went to prison, but we were creating what was, I guess, a pre-Party formation. I would go every so many days to the SNCC HQ in Atlanta to get the Panther newspaper. I would go and sell the paper in Chattanooga and talk to black youth and so forth. I'd got a little group of black youth around me and we were talking seriously about forming a party chapter. It was 67/68 and I was receiving severe repression from the police. Some terrible beatings. I got my head caved in a few times, framed up on criminal charges and all kinds of stuff. When King was assassinated, the repression from the resulting protests drove me out of the city. But we had circulated the newspaper, organised. So I was, like, sowing the seeds. I saw the fruit of that from behind bars as I went to prison in 1969.

They were important years in terms of developing my political understanding. When I went to prison I met other Panthers inside from all over who I served pretty substantial amounts of time with. Inside I had a better understanding of the national picture than I had outside.

## Paramilitary Cops

**L** To understand that time it's worth realising that the police are more of a paramilitary force in this period than they were in the 1960s. They were overwhelmed by the 60s inner city rioting. These rebellions—Detroit, Chicago, New York etc. really shook up the state. They didn't know how to handle it. They couldn't handle it. They had to bring in the National Guard—the army. The police as a force started changing around that time. They started bringing in more and more levels of



paramilitary. They had more and more funds at their discretion from central government to buy all kinds of advanced military weaponry. They got a lot of surplus weaponry from Vietnam and even Korea—they got automatic weapons, personnel carriers and over the years they've gotten larger and larger budgets to buy military armaments. Now the police is a paramilitary force with advanced military technology including communications, surveillance equipment, certainly armaments of all kinds. You see them in the streets—they are really heavily armed. However bad it was back then it wasn't anything like this is now.

I think that what you got today is style over substance. You've got a lot of people who talk about militancy and they get the Black Panthers style, but they don't have any programme and they don't do any practical work in the community. That is the frustrating part of this period because the BPP does not exist now, and it's hard to make the youth understand that you just can't go out and strap on a gun and that's going to make you equal to the police.

Now that the police have this armament, they kill people just for having guns. They'll shoot kids for having toy guns! I know it's happened numerous times where young kids—13, 10, 12 years old, have been shot and killed by the police, because they had some cap pistol or some kind of water pistol or gun.

**J** "We thought it was a real gun..."

**L** ...so they say. They are killing people on suspicion of having guns. People have been killed for having deadly weapons such as wallets or razors.

**J** A West African immigrant was shot with 41 bullets, 19 of which killed him. The police claim



## COINTELPRO: A War on Radical America

By the time the Panthers came along the FBI had been conducting Counter-Intelligence Programmes (COINTELPRO) to disrupt left and Puerto Rican groups for years. Thanks to thousands of FBI documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, we know that agents were asked by their superiors to formulate "Imaginative and hard-hitting counter-intelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP". Massive surveillance via wiretaps, burglaries, live tails and mail tampering was only the beginning.

The Feds shared information and collaborated with local police units. At least 38 Panthers were murdered by various police agencies between 1968 and 1972, and at least 12 others died in 'shooting wars' fostered by the FBI. Hundreds more party members and their supporters were beaten or suffered gunshot wounds.

COINTELPRO methods that appear in released FBI memos:

**Forged Mail.** The FBI regularly sent forged correspondence to groups or members of groups to exacerbate differences among activists and to create snitch jackets (see below).

**Fake 'Propaganda'.** The FBI fabricated and distributed publications, leaflets, broadsheets, cartoons etc. in the name of targeted organizations designed to misrepresent their positions, goals and objectives in a way to publicly discredit them and increase tensions within and between groups.

**Disinformation.** The FBI released false info to their media contacts. They hoped this process would condition public sentiment to accept brutal Bureau/police repression. Potential killer cops on the beat also watched the TV and thereby had their worst Panther nightmares reinforced. This had the effect of increasing trigger-finger itch during street confrontations.

**Harassment Arrests.** Repeated arrests of targeted individuals on spurious charges were carried out, not to obtain convictions, but to demoralize, harass and increase paranoia. Arrestees and their supporters found themselves and movement money tied up in case after case.

**Informers and Agent Provocateurs.** Thousands of informers were used against radical groups in this period. In the BPP and in other groups, many also functioned as *agent provocateurs*. They encouraged or engaged in illegal activities that could then be attributed to Party members. They disrupted internal functioning and assisted in the spread of disinformation. To exploit rifts between rival black groups, *agent provocateurs* were escalating the fighting, sometimes starting gun battles.

**Snitch-Jacketing.** Suspicion would be created, through the spreading of rumours, manufacture of evidence etc. that loyal group members, usually in key positions, were FBI informers. In the case of the BPP, agents knew the likely outcome of this tactic would be extreme violence directed at the jacketed individuals.

**Political Assassinations.** The FBI physically eliminated selected activists, often after other attempts at destroying their effectiveness had failed. They mostly used surrogates, but provided the intelligence and logistics.

For those feeling smug about not living in the US it might be worth pointing out that ALL the above tactics have been used domestically by the British state during its war with the Irish Republican movement.

they killed him because he was reaching in his pocket for a weapon. The weapon was his wallet!

**L** He actually came out with the wallet. They killed this 5 year old kid the other side of California several years ago—with a baby. It's just the idea that the police should use any level of deadly force that they think necessary and then justify that with saying, "Well, he thought it was necessary!" When it happens a few times, maybe they can sell it to the masses of people that it's an accident, that it's something that was regrettable. When it happens over and over and 1,000 people die a year then that's too bad. People know then that's class warfare. The police have declared war on you, on your people, poor people—that's what the deal is. That was why the Black Panther Party came into existence as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence. It's a necessity today, but it requires understanding that this was a political organisation not just a damn militia. You know, people can't just think, "Let's form a black militia, that's going to do it!" You've got to form more than that, you've got to form a political organisation guided by some kind of understanding of the way the system works.

## Seattle & White Anarchists

I wanted to know your views on recent events like Seattle. What do you think of the white anarchist movement in America and across Europe? Where do you see black groups in America going in the next five years?

**L** The Seattle demonstration, the success of it, even the coalition, was very surprising. I don't necessarily see that as the way. Firstly there's the question of longevity—is it going to last more than a year or two, even that far. Secondly, in the inner cities most of the people there are black and brown and we don't see them as of yet. It's more than just a



question of involving black people in the actual events, but also understanding that the same forces responsible for the debt and the impoverishment of 'Third World' countries are the same people who are responsible for the deterioration of the black community and the inner cities of the United States. They're responsible for mass homelessness, they are responsible for the unemployment that is bedevilling the inner cities of the United States. We also think there's weaknesses in terms of them being primarily middle class—even though they're progressive—they have not got a working class base, white or black.

It was evident in Seattle that there was some union participation, more than there was in Washington DC which was just almost totally youth. In Washington DC—which is 85% black—the demo was almost entirely white. They had not raised the issues which allowed them to connect with black working class people. These things are going to be a noose around their neck if they don't understand that they have to revise their politics and be more inclusive. Black people are not going to come and join that movement unless there are genuine attempts to correct those deficiencies. Having said this, the fact is that these kids are in the streets, fighting with the fuckin' police with an anti-capitalist perspective... This does remind me of the old Panther politics. They're broader in the sense that there are much larger numbers and they are an open coalition—which I don't think we could have afforded to have done back then. Obviously, we'll see the effect on the situation when the secret police penetrates further—we'll see. Right now, we can just say, it's remarkable to see the success rate at this stage.

Then there's the question of the idea of the anarchist movement. You know for over twenty-five years I've been critical of the anarchist movement for its failure to involve itself in the struggles of blacks or other peoples of colour. Anarchism has some strengths in terms of its theories, in its grassroots organising style—which many movements can use and jump off with. Certainly some of that has been reflected in the Seattle movement. It also has some real serious problems in its inability to interact with peoples of colour. I've seen everything from outright racism to condescension and pandering and everything in between. I've experienced that in my dealings with the anarchist movement in the States especially. One example is when I was working with Love and Rage, and I had submitted a written proposal, to allow us to build a semi-autonomous people of colour organisation within it. I received severe censure and chastisement by the main movers in that organisation. I had to quit it. Same thing happened with the Industrial Workers of the World

which I was part of, which is not allegedly an anarchist organisation but has a majority membership of anarcho-sindicalist types. I felt the same thing. I wrote a proposal for black/people of colour workers organising group to bring in workers of colour and broaden the agenda of the IWW and of course this was rejected as separatism.

## Community Organising

**L** I have these kinds of experiences, which have taught me that it's important for us to organise autonomously. We won't have to put up with this sort of garbage if we can organise autonomously. As an autonomous formation with our own base of strength in the black community, then we can deal with other organisations from a position of strength and get respect for our positions. That's just one of the realities. Or we can, if we so choose, stay in the community and just organise there and leave the white anarchists to their thing.

Now what we've done, we've created an organisation, the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organisers, which is for sure a formative organization. However we think we've got potential to really reach deep into the black community with a practical programme in addition to just a set of ideas. Another weakness with the movement is that it's got analysis with paralysis. It's got political ideas but it doesn't have a practical programme to do grassroots work. So you therefore wind up with a bunch of white kids or some other youth base from the petit bourgeoisie. We think we've got a chance to build working class black and non-white support. We think we can reach in around the issues that are really important—the day to day issues of poor working class people. We can build that kind of alliance. But we can also come out of the community and raise issues that other forces outside will unite around. It's important to recognize, just as the Panthers did, that although issues might begin in





the black community, they don't terminate in the black community. The point is to recognise there can be autonomy on the one hand (certainly for the black struggle and the women's struggle)—and at the same time there can be class unity.

The left doesn't mean shit in this period. The Black Nationalist movement doesn't mean shit in this period—they just represent a very small number of people, they're petit bourgeoisie to the core. Our approach has to be instead of worrying about all this garbage, do community work, win the people and all the other bullshit will fall into place. All of that really doesn't matter. And you know, our thing is to try and reach into the black masses, lift their level of consciousness. Grab a hold of them and bring them into the work that we're doing around practical things. Things that really affect them—food, housing, stopping police brutality. This is what we're attempting to do. It has not been easy to get in a position to even build a strong group. We're trying to do that, it will happen. We think we'll break out of this whole stage. You know, it's the kind of stage the Black Panther Party found itself in too, at one time being one of a number of Black Power formations. It was able to break out of that. I think we'll be able to do that as well.

J I think one of the lessons... one of the things that Huey Newton used to talk about was that in the black community you really can't just be concerned with a political ideology. You really have to have programmes that meet the concrete needs of people: food, clothing, housing, shelter, whatever. If you have that, then people can relate to you. If all you have is an ideology it's irrelevant to them. They're not going to deal with it. I think

that was very important. Poor people, working class people, they want to know, "What kind of programme do you have that will help me keep the police off my back, get a better school for my kids, put food on the table, find me a job". Other than that and you're irrelevant to the black community and you might as well not waste your time.★



Many Black Liberation prisoners are still held in America's gulags. Do not read this article but fail to act on it—write to them. See our prisoner section for details.

**You can contact JoNina and Lorenzo c/o Black Autonomy News Service, PO Box 19962, Kalamazoo, MI 49019, USA. Tel: (616) 337-7653**  
**For news on the activity of ex-Panthers and prisoners of war read It's About Time... Newsletter. For copies send a donation in dollars to: It's About Time Committee & Black Panther Party Alumni Committee, PO Box 22110, Sacramento, CA 95822, USA.**

## Further Reading & Watching

***This Side of Glory***, David Hilliard (Little, Brown and Co, Boston, 1993): Written by the one-time Captain of the BPP, this book is the most fascinating reflection on the Panthers and their times and what happened afterwards to have appeared. Although not a critique, Hilliard is so damned honest that it's got all the ingredients of one. Inspiring and painful reading.

***Power to the People***: Originally produced for US TV it was pulled because of its radical content. Over two hours long this film is built up with dozens of interviews with ex-Panthers, prisoners of war and renegade ex-CIA/FBI officers plus lots of news footage from the time. Available from Brighton ABC for £4—see prison section for address.

***Agents of Repression***, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall (South End Press, Boston, 1989): Without a doubt the best account of the FBI's secret war on the Panthers and the American Indian Movement. A must read for activists.

***Black Panthers For Beginners***, Herb Boyd (Writers and Readers Publishing, New York, 1995): A basic introductory

cartoon book to the subject. By far the most accessible of the books listed here.

***BAD: The Autobiography of James Carr*** (Pelagian Press, London, 1995): From a child prodigy of crime in the LA ghettos, to an adult life spent in prison. From George Jackson and the Black Panthers to the Situationists. Probably the best book you're ever likely to read on the horrors of prison life.

***Panther***, Mario and Melvin Van Peebles: This film—available in your local Videobox/Blockbuster—is a dramatization of the life and times of the Panthers. Surprisingly accurate with many events and with much actual footage interwoven it's definitely worth watching—being commercial it also doesn't bore the pants off you. To go with the film came...

***Panther: A Pictorial History Of The Black Panthers And The Story Behind The Film*** (Newmarket Press, New York, 1995): The book is very informative, includes over 200 photos and is written by Mario Van Peebles, the film's director, and J. Tarika Lewis, the Panthers' first female recruit.



# BURNING ALL ILLUSIONS

## LA Insurrection 1965/1992



### 1965

August 13th-16th 1965: the blacks of LA revolted. An incident between traffic police and pedestrians developed into two days of spontaneous riots. Despite increasing reinforcements, the forces of order were unable to regain control of the streets. By the third day the blacks had armed themselves by looting gun stores, enabling them to fire even on police helicopters. It took thousands of police and soldiers—including an entire infantry division supported by tanks—to confine the riot to the Watts area, and several more days of street fighting to finally bring it under control. Thousands of stores were plundered and burned. Official sources listed 32 dead (including 27 blacks), more than 800 wounded and 3,000 arrests...

Looting is a natural response to the unnatural and inhuman society of commodity abundance. It instantly undermines the commodity as such, and it also exposes what the commodity ultimately implies: the army, the police. What is a policeman? He is the active servant of the commodity whose job it is to ensure that a given product of human labour remains a commodity, with the magical property of having to be paid for, instead of becoming a mere refrigerator or rifle—a passive,



inanimate object, subject to anyone who comes along to make use of it. In rejecting the humiliation of being subject to police, the blacks are at the same time rejecting the humiliation of being subject to commodities.

Bobbi Hollon, a young black of the neighbourhood had this to say in October: "Before, people were ashamed to say they came from Watts. They'd mumble it. Now they say it with pride. Boys who used to go around with their shirts open to the waist, and who'd have cut you to pieces in half a second, showed up here every morning at seven o'clock to organise the



*Given the choice of war abroad in Vietnam or war at home against the white elite, blacks rioted across America in the 1960s.*

distribution of food. Of course, it's no use pretending that the food wasn't looted. All that Christian blah has been used too long against blacks. These people could loot for ten years and they wouldn't get back half the money those stores have stolen from them over all these years... Me, I'm only a little black girl." Bobbi, who has sworn never to wash off the blood that splashed on her sandals during the rioting, adds: "Now the whole world is watching Watts."

*(Taken from 'Watts 1965—The Decline and fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy' by the Situationist International, in the Situationist International Anthology, translated and edited by Ken Knabb, Bureau of Public Secrets, USA, 1981)*

### 1992

"There's a difference between frustration with the law and direct assaults upon our legal system."—George Bush, May 3rd, 1992.

The first rocks started to fly as the four cops who beat Rodney King and the jury who acquitted them were leaving the courtroom in suburban Simi



Valley. Subsequent to the acquittal of the cops, on the afternoon of April 29th 1992, thousands of people began pouring into the streets of Los Angeles. In a few hours rioting spread across the LA metropolitan area. Conditions rapidly approached the level of civil war. The police withdrew from the main areas of fighting, ceding the streets to the insurgent poor. Systematic burnings of capitalist enterprises commenced. More than 5,500 buildings burned. People shot at cops on the street and at media and police helicopters. Seventeen government buildings were destroyed. The *Los Angeles Times* was attacked and looted. A vast canopy of smoke from the buildings covered the LA Basin. Flights out of LA airport were cancelled and incoming flights had to be diverted due to the smoke and sniper fire.

The rioting was the single most violent episode of social unrest in the US in the twentieth century, far outstripping the urban revolts of the 1960s both in sheer destructiveness and in the fact that the riots were a multiracial revolt of the poor. In the initial phase of the LA riots, the police were rapidly overwhelmed and retreated, and the military did not appear until the rioting had abated.

The *New York Times* noted: "Some areas took on the atmosphere of a street party as black, white, Hispanic and Asian residents mingled to share in a carnival of looting. As the greatly outnumbered police looked on, people of all ages (and genders), some carrying small children, wandered in and out of supermarkets with shopping bags and armloads of shoes, liquor, radios, groceries, wigs, auto parts, gumball machines and guns".

The 30,000 square foot military enlistment centre for all nine counties of Southern California was burned to the ground on the first night. The state portrayed the rioting as an episode of indiscriminate mayhem where rioters attacked each other like sharks in a feeding frenzy. Crimes against people, such as rape and drive-by shootings, virtually disappeared as previously atomised proletarians of different colours and ethnicities came together in mass collective violence, proletarian shopping and a potlatch of destruction. There were far fewer rapes and muggings during the period than there are in LA under the normal rule of law. On a conservative

estimate, more than 100,000 rebel poor in the greater LA area have now collectively experienced, in arson, looting and violence against the police, the intelligent use of violence as a political weapon. The number of participants in the uprising is well into the six-figure range. We know this because there were around 11,000 arrests (5,000 black, 5,500 Latino, 600 white) and the vast majority of participants got away scot-free.

Following the lead of events in the nation's cultural capital, mass spontaneous rioting spread to several dozen cities across the US. In San Francisco more than a hundred stores were looted and rich areas were attacked. One of the large posh hotels had its windows smashed by a gang of youths chanting "The Rich Must Die". Protesters marched onto the Interstate Freeway, causing a massive tailback affecting several hundred thousand car commuters. In San Jose, students looted and attacked police cruisers. Police were shot at in Tampa, Florida, and in Las Vegas, armed rioters burned a state parole and probation office. Armed confrontations between the police and locals continued in Las Vegas for the next 18 days. In Seattle a burning police car was pushed into police ranks and there was loads of looting, smashing and burning in downtown Seattle. Similar events happened all over the US.

On May 2nd, 5,000 LAPD, 1,000 Sheriff's Deputies, 950 County Marshals and 2,300 Highway Patrol cops, accompanied by 9,975 National Guard troops, 3,500 Army troops and Marines with armoured vehicles and 1,000 Federal Marshals, FBI agents and Border Patrol SWAT teams moved in to restore order and guard the shopping malls. Hundreds were wounded. Most of the people killed in the uprising were killed in the repression of the revolt. After much fighting and the largest mass arrest in US history the LA 92 insurrection came to a close.

LA and the nation-wide rioting demonstrates clearly that the most realistic, practical, immediate way for poor people to overcome internalised racism and racial divisions among themselves is found in a common fight against our mutual enemies—the cops, the business classes, the rich and the market economy.★

*(Taken from 'We All Hate the Cops' in Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed, No.34, Fall 1992)*





# ANIMAL ANTIICS

## In the Bally of the Beast!



"Huge numbers of grunting cod have been blamed by Norwegian scientists for posing a risk to the country's military security. According to a recent analysis, millions of tiny grunting sounds emitted by the cod during the mating season can create background noise loud enough to blot out sounds of suspicious maritime activity. The fish are overriding sonar systems, making it almost impossible to navigate safely under the waters of the Norwegian Sea." —*Bizarre* magazine, No.18, March 1999.

"While pursuing a complaint from a farmer in Chaguanas, central Trinidad, that someone had stolen his livestock, police chased a rental car with its headlights off. The driver escaped, and police found a goat wearing a shirt, pants and a hat and a sheep wearing a dress in the back seat. There were two more goats—in shirts and pants—in the trunk." —*Orange County Register*, 16/5/99, in *Fortean Times*, No.126, September 1999.

"View halloo turned to tally-ho as the in-season Exmoor pack chased a fox into fields at Winsford, Somerset, used by East Dulverton hunt. The fox was soon gone and forgotten when an all-male pack of hounds picked up the scent of 30 broody bitches from a rival hunt. The dogs did what comes naturally—and it took furious huntsmen 90 minutes to separate them." —*Daily Mirror*, 21/2/95.

"A group of orangutans at the National Zoological Park in Washington DC are going to be taught the rules of commerce. The apes will be paid a dally allowance of metal coins which they can spend on buying bananas, popcorn and other items. Zoologists hope the orangutans will prove adept at handling numbers, judging the value of an item, and maybe even start trading among themselves." —*Bizarre* magazine, No.21, June 1999.

"Amelia Roybal opened her front door to see who was ringing the bell—and in walked a 2ft tall drunken monkey. He seemed determined to make himself at home. He lurched towards the drinks cabinet, poured himself a large whisky and slurped it down... the monkey, who turned out to be named Myron, continued drinking and became steadily more aggressive. "He went bananas," said Amelia, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, "and my husband couldn't take the bottle from him." Then the tipsy monkey started throwing china at the couple. When they cornered him in the laundry room, Myron retaliated by filling the washing machine with soap powder and raising a storm of suds. Myron was happily eating the plastic fruit in the dining room when the law appeared in the person of Deputy Sheriff Frank Garcia. Amelia said: "The deputy came in acting brave—but that didn't last long. As soon as Myron saw the blue uniform he raided the pantry and started shying potatoes and oranges at

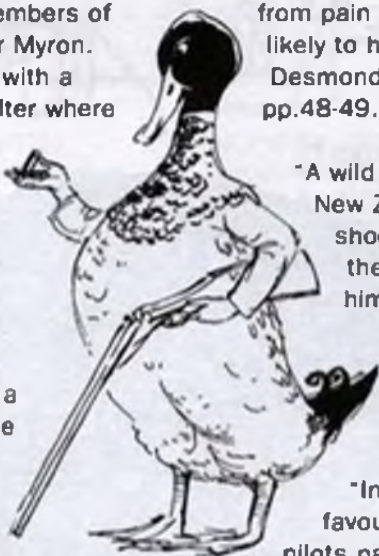


us with considerable accuracy." Reinforcements arrived and soon 5 deputies and 7 members of the Roybal family were trying to corner Myron. He was eventually captured by 3 men with a large net and taken to the animal shelter where he sat, back to the world, with his head clasped in his hands, suffering, no doubt, from a man-size hangover."—*Weekend magazine*, 15-21st June 1977.

"'Laddie' and 'Boy' were trained as detector dogs for drugs raids. Their employment was terminated following a raid in the Midlands in 1967. While the investigating officer questioned two suspects, they patted and stroked the dogs who eventually fell asleep in front of the fire. When the officer moved to arrest the suspects, one dog growled at him while the other leapt up and bit his thigh."—*The Book of Heroic Failures* by Stephen Pile (Futura, 1980) p.90.

"For instance, he was out walking with a tame raven one afternoon. The bird was free-flying and, in order to keep it close to him, Lorenz [Konrad Lorenz, pioneer of animal behaviour studies] had taken the precaution of filling one of his pockets with small pieces of raw meat. Every so often, he would call to the bird (he was fluent in Raven) and as it approached, would put his hand into the meat-pocket, take out a strip of meat, and feed it to his great, black companion. This procedure meant that, although the raven would zoom off into the sky, it always kept a bright, beady corvine eye on Konrad's movements, as he wandered across the summer fields. They continued like this for several hours, with the bird returning regularly to Lorenz's side for a further tidbit. As it was a hot day, Lorenz had drunk copiously at lunch-time and now needed to relieve himself. As there was nobody about, he moved near a hedge, undid his trousers, and started to do so. The raven's sharp eye had observed Lorenz undoing his trousers and assumed that he was opening another pocket to extract a fresh piece of meat. Swooping down with a raucous cry, the great bird seized this new piece of meat, clamping down tightly on it with its massive powerful beak. Lorenz let out a roar like a wounded bull and began leaping dementedly about in the corner of the field. The raven was nonplussed by this extraordinary behaviour and could not understand why its human friend was so reluctant to hand over a piece of meat that was so plainly meant for its consumption. Placing its huge feet firmly on Lorenz's body, the bird started to tug fiercely at the stubbornly resistant food-offering, like a blackbird trying to pull an earthworm from a

garden lawn. Lorenz claims that he nearly fainted from pain and loss of blood, but it is more likely to have been shock."—*Animal Days* by Desmond Morris (Jonathan Cape, 1979) pp.48-49.



"A wild duck took revenge on a hunter in New Zealand's North Island during a shooting trip in May 1985. It dived out of the sky, knocking him out and leaving him with two black eyes, a broken nose and cracked glasses. It killed itself in the process."—*Would You Believe It?* by Phillip Mason (Futura, 1990) p.10.

"In the Falkland Islands... reputedly a favoured entertainment of bored Harrier pilots patrolling the coast is penguin toppling. Allegedly when the pilots come across a penguin colony, they catch the birds' attention by flying slowly backwards and forwards in front of them until all the penguins are watching the plane. As they fly left, all the penguins' heads turn left to follow them—back to the right and the penguins turn that way. They do this a few times until the whole colony is behaving like Wimbledon spectators. Then they fly out to sea with the birds still watching, turn the plane round and zoom back directly over the penguins' heads at high speed. All the birds crane upwards to try to follow the rocketing plane—and 10,000 penguins fall flat on their backs."—*Fortean Times Book of Exploding Pigs*, by Ian Simmons (John Brown Publishing, 1997) p.46.

Many thanks to the authors of *Rolf Harris—True Animal Tales and Beastly Behaviour*—and of course to the great old didge-blowing ham himself.★





# Running to Stand Still

## Globalisation, Blagging and the Dole

Over the years the government has helpfully financed many campaigns and actions against itself. Lots of people in the direct action movement rely on dole money from the state in order to survive. However, over the last few years there has been a big shake up of the welfare state. What has our response been to this? How will it affect us? And has the supply of free money finally run dry?

Throughout the past two decades, the dole has provided the basis for a number of creative projects and movements, some of which have been overtly political. In the 1980s, the relaxed benefit regime allowed many to drop out of work and form new types of antagonistic lifestyles and tendencies, for example around the anarcho-punk scene. This was carried on into the 1990s when the dole became the basis for the growing anti-roads movement, the campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill, as well as the more recent development of the militant direct action movement. Being on the dole has simply given us the time to become full-time politicians; the dole has in effect been a 'trouble-maker's grant'. After all, who can find the time to do an office action on a Monday morning, spend days waiting for an eviction or take part in days of action from J18 to Bastille Day that always seem to be on a week day? Fair enough, phoning in sick became part of the action on J18, but we can't exactly phone in sick every week when we want to go to an action, let alone risk being locked up in a cell for days. But apart from giving us the time to become full-time politicians, in an important sense opting out of work has become a political statement in itself in the direct action scene.

The first major attack on this lifestyle came in the mid-1990s when the Conservative government replaced the old-style benefit regime with the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). This was followed shortly by the workfare scheme, 'Project Work', which was piloted in a number of towns and then implemented more widely by the New Labour

government.

Both were met by some collective resistance. However, when New Labour introduced a much more ambitious quasi-workfare based programme, the 'New Deal', the limited collective resistance there had been previously was reduced to individual solutions, characterised by blags and scams.

It was this lack of collective resistance to the New Deal, and more recently to the Welfare Reform Act, that led some to emphasise the tragic consequences this would have for the direct action scene.<sup>1</sup> Arguing that the dole was the financial basis for the so-called full-time politico, the recent attacks on the dole were seen as potentially a threat to this movement. Whereas previously long-term unemployment, and hence the political opportunities it afforded, could almost be thought of as a life-time career, the slogan 'no fifth option'<sup>2</sup>—repeatedly voiced by the Blairites in No. 10—served to illustrate that such careers would no longer be possible.

However, two years into the New Deal, it seems that all this fuss was over nothing. Quite a few people have been on the introductory stage of the New Deal as well as on placements, and contrary to the doom and gloom predictions, in some areas at least, people have found it quite easy to blag their way through it. Perhaps the introduction of Welfare to Work-type schemes wasn't such a big threat to the movement after all.





## The Global Workhouse

Before discussing the effectiveness of blagging, it is necessary briefly to examine the rationale behind the current tendency for workfare-type programmes and to situate their introduction in the context of our struggles. After all, what has the New Deal got to do with genetics, road building, animal liberation, prison actions or reclaiming our streets?

The concept of 'globalisation' is one which many in the direct action movement have used to make the link between our diverse struggles. As has been discussed in these pages, 'globalisation' is the problematic term commonly used to describe the strategy pursued by capital in response to the last revolutionary upsurge which took place at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> In Britain and other advanced industrialised countries, the post-war compromise between capital and labour was essentially based on a productivity deal in which higher wages were conditional upon a growth in productivity. But by the end of the 1960s, workers demanded higher wages only now for less and less work. At its highest point, this tendency expressed itself as a refusal of work at the point of production. The link between wages and work was being stretched to the limit and beyond. The response of capital was flight from investment in those industries and countries characterised by this 'bloody-mindedness' and refusal. Such flight thus served to outflank areas of working class strength.

This restructuring was particularly acute in Britain. Unlike some of the other advanced industrialised countries, Britain was a relatively developed centre of finance capital, and therefore could afford to abandon huge swathes of its manufacturing industry. Politically, therefore, the Thatcherite project meant the introduction of policies that capitalised on the transformation of large-scale manufacture into footloose global finance capital.

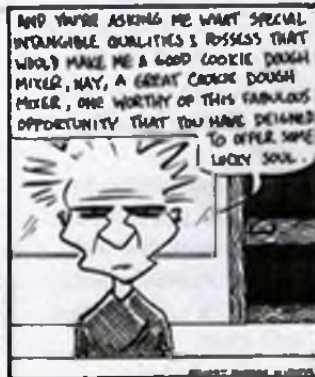
Most importantly, the post-war consensus around full employment was abandoned. Instead, unemployment was allowed to let rip. Along with anti-strike legislation, the creation of a pool of

unemployed workers was intended to eliminate some of the more militant sections and to discipline the working class as a whole.

While the 'neo-liberal' policies employed by many of the governments in the advanced industrialised countries had some success in curbing militant and revolutionary tendencies among workers, they also served to create a number of barriers to further capital expansion. From the point of view of capital, a pool of unemployed workers encourages those within work to work harder and accept lower wages by operating as the competition. Yet if the pool of unemployed is allowed to become stagnant, it will no longer represent such competition, and instead existing workers will still retain some leverage in their relations with the bosses. What had in fact emerged was a dual labour market where those out of work were either unwilling to find work or perceived as being unemployable; as a result, the people in work could move around from job to job still demanding relatively high wages.<sup>4</sup> It therefore became hard to impose flexible working conditions. Some of the highest expressions of this unemployed 'recalcitrance' were among those who consciously used the dole as the basis for various anti-capitalist projects. In effect, the refusal of work that had previously appeared at the point of production had now been displaced onto the dole.

Industrial capital in countries such as Britain transformed itself into globally footloose finance capital in order to seek the most accommodating labour markets. Yet, in proletarianising workers in less-industrialised countries such as Taiwan and Korea, it served to create militants where they hadn't previously existed. The multinational companies and investment firms that we associate with globalisation therefore continually need nation-states to re-impose the most conducive labour conditions so that they can flee those countries where they are threatened by worker militancy. In short, *globalisation is essentially about the re-imposition of work.*

In Britain and other advanced industrialised countries, the stagnant reserve army of labour had to be done away with in order to attract greater





capital investment. It is no coincidence that all these countries are now pursuing similar policies in order to develop compliant labour market conditions. The policies in Britain, the USA, France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Canada, Australia and New Zealand go by a number of names and vary in their degree of compulsion, but all are variations on the theme of work-for-dole, or workfare.

Workfare, then, is the face of globalisation for many of us. Workfare overcomes the problem of 'recalcitrance' in the reserve army of labour by inculcating work-discipline in everyone. Both those who seek a job but who have been out of work for too long and those who found in mass unemployment an opportunity to pursue anti-capitalist lifestyles are to be instilled with the necessary work-discipline to participate in the labour-market.

Although in Britain it is New Labour which has made the principles of workfare the keystone of its attempt to restructure the labour-market, the foundations were already laid by the Conservatives, with the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in 1996. Being unwilling to increase public spending, the Conservatives hoped that the dual labour-market could be overcome simply by pressuring people into the existing jobs. By putting in place sanctions for any of us who couldn't provide proof that we had been applying for jobs, it replaced the notion of us being passive claimants with one of us being active job-seekers. A further advance was made in the re-imposition of work with Project Work—a quasi-workfare scheme presented as a 'work experience' programme rather than 'work-for-your-benefits'.

But as with other overtly neo-liberal measures introduced by the Tories, these policies not only failed to gather public support, but the orthodox neo-liberal insistence on not increasing public spending on welfare was to be their downfall. The punitive approach to unemployment meant that not only claimants directly affected by the measures came out in opposition, which on the direct action and anarcho scene mainly manifested itself in the actions of the Groundswell network, but the dole workers themselves put up considerable resistance, in some areas downing tools on the day the JSA came into force.<sup>5</sup> But although this resistance did prevent the smooth implementation of both the JSA and Project Work, the limits of both ultimately became obvious more as a result of them being grossly under-funded, and consequently serving more to fiddle the unemployment figures by pushing people off the dole than dealing sufficiently with the dual labour market.

## The New Deal and the Welfare Reform Act

When New Labour, shortly after they came into office, launched the New Deal as the government's



*Riot to Work? The unemployed did things differently then... A march of the Right to Work Campaign in London in 1908. There was a national Right to Work movement in the early years of the last century with committees being set up across the country between 1904 and 1908. Their threat was not an idle one—in 1905 there was serious 'Right to Work' rioting in Manchester.*

flagship policy, it was hoped that both the problem of public perception of the schemes and the problem of their overtly punitive nature could be effectively avoided. In line with the so-called 'Third Way' between social democracy and neo-liberalism, they abandoned Conservative dogma against state intervention. By investing £3.5 billion in the programme (a lot more than they could ever hope to save in the short-term from getting people off the dole), their intention was clear: the New Deal was not just supposed to slash a few million quid off the welfare bill, but was an altogether more ambitious scheme aimed at tackling the dual labour market once and for all.

And unlike the old punitive schemes relying on merely pushing people off the dole, the New Deal was sold as a state-led attempt to do away with 'social exclusion'. Consequently, when the New Deal was launched as a compulsory scheme for 18-24 year olds in April 1998, the initial 'Gateway stage' was presented not as an extension of the intensive job-search introduced with the JSA, but as a three-month period of 'individualised job-counselling'. The subsequent four 'options' of educational training, sweeping streets on the 'Environmental Task Force', or a placement either in the 'voluntary' sector or a subsidised job were presented not as working for your dole but as work experience programmes that would provide the unemployed with a smooth entry into the job-





The 'recalcitrant unemployed' demonstrate outside the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in 1997.

market. The New Deal has since been extended to most other age groups, single parents and partners of the unemployed.

With the recent introduction of the Welfare Reform Act, this 'help' has been extended to all other claimants not sufficiently covered under the other schemes: by the simple act of centralising all the benefit offices into a 'one-stop-shop', the work-focused interviews associated with the JSA will now be extended to all other claims. Under the banner of 'helping the disabled back into the community', they are justifying getting people off the sick (whereas encouraging people to go on the sick previously served as a means to fiddle unemployment figures, New Labour has made it clear that whatever your condition, there is now no safe haven from the labour market). Moreover, abandoning the social-democratic dogma of public ownership, New Labour have sought to introduce the dynamism of the market into the Job Centres themselves, by privatising Employment Service functions at the same time as some of the new elements of 'Welfare Reform' have been introduced. Thus not only is the New Deal delivered by private firms (such as Reed Employment) in some areas, but the new intensive 'Employment Zones' are the responsibility of consortia made up of partnerships between the Employment Service and companies such as Ernst & Young and Manpower.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, although New Labour tries to present their Welfare to Work programme as a more integrative approach to the issue of unemployment, and as such a departure from the punitive and openly neo-liberal approach of the previous government, the reality is that they do this only because it is a more efficient way of integrating the recalcitrant unemployed into a flexible labour market. The language and state-intervention normally associated with social democracy has come to the service of a neo-liberal agenda. And as is acutely clear for anybody who has had to sit through one of their work-focused interviews, and politely turn down their 'help', the bedrock of the New Deal is of course still the harsh JSA regime they so proudly proclaim

themselves to have departed from: refuse the counselling or the 'options' and you will have all your benefits stopped.

## Dole Workers and Activists

Despite the clear discrepancy between the reality of the recent attacks on the dole and the ideological offensive that has accompanied it, a lot of lefty-liberals seem to have bought into it. Indeed it has to some extent succeeded in getting the people on board who had previously shown the most fierce and effective resistance to the JSA and Project Work, namely many of the dole workers. To some extent identifying with the concept of 'work being important for your self-respect', many see their role as being one of helping the individual claimants into a better existence. The New Deal with its seemingly individualised claimant-based approach and job counselling seems to do just that, and as a result the resistance of the past has become more muted, despite continuing cynicism among dole workers about government policies.<sup>7</sup>

A similar thing seems to have happened in the direct action scene. Where there was at least some collective resistance against the JSA and Project Work, resistance to the New Deal has been if not non-existent, then much less visible—mostly taking the form of individual blags. Has the direct action scene been taken in by NewLabourSpeak? We think not. In fact, in an important sense, they couldn't be further apart. Where the lefty-liberals' part endorsement of New Labour's Welfare to Work programme, in contrast to their opposition to the previous schemes, is essentially based on an identification with social democracy, the people in the direct action scene seem to have no such illusions about the supposedly progressive nature of this. The notion of 'duties and responsibilities to society' is quite clearly seen as duties to state and capital. And the notion of 'work being good for your soul' hasn't exactly had any resonance either.

The reason why there has been no overt resistance to the New Deal and the Welfare Reform Act in the activist scene lies not so much in ideology as in practicalities. The very inclusiveness of New Labour's Welfare to Work scheme has made it a great deal easier for us to blag our way through than it was at first thought. Ironically, one of the reasons why this has been the case in at least some areas around the country lies in the fact that the dole workers have in certain unforeseen ways taken seriously the 'new ethos' of the New Deal. Many dole workers resent the 'policing' aspects of their job and have taken advantage of the flexibility of the new schemes to avoid pressuring people; they have allowed people to stay on the Gateway job counselling stage well beyond the three months limit set by the government. Their acceptance of



the New Deal and the Welfare Reform Act as genuine measures to 'help' claimants also means that they have welcomed claimants' own initiatives, thereby making it easier for us to sort out our own soft placements. The result has in many areas been that a lot of claimants have found it easier to stay on the dole without much hassle.

But apart from this, people in the direct action scene have, as always, been quick in developing a number of elaborate blags and scams. Before the current purge of those entitled to sickness benefit, the easiest and quickest way to avoid being included in the New Deal would be to fake depression or an unidentifiable physical illness. But even if this is no longer possible, plenty of other avenues are still open. Out of a whole number of scams, the most common one has been to find some fake placement with a friend or contact in which you are officially placed on a work experience programme in whatever company. In this way many have been able to keep the dole office off their back, without ever having to show up either at the so-called placement or to sign on every fortnight. Of course, not all of us are so lucky—instead we find that we are actually expected to help out a bit at our 'fake' placement (a favour for a favour). But even so, digging some organic allotment once in a while, helping out in some right-on book shop, political archive or 'Third World' centre isn't really that much of a hassle. In fact, it might not even be that far removed from what we would be doing anyway. Even better, some have been able to turn the New Deal to their own advantage by getting on an otherwise pricey mountaineering, Desk Top Publishing or Web Design course—all handy skills when you want to set up a road camp, occupy buildings or produce political magazines and web sites.

And if things start to get tough, if you are signing on with your partner, you can always swap the claim, or alternatively just sign off for about three months, do a bit of work and go abroad. So even if schemes such as the New Deal initially appeared as a potential threat to the movement, in some cases quite the opposite would seem to have happened. Not only have a substantial amount of people around the direct action scene been able to work their way around it, but it has arguably helped us to become more effective political activists. If the old dole regime was characterised as a 'trouble-maker's grant', this term has now gained an added meaning (a trouble-maker's training scheme?).

However, it is quite likely that the effects the changes in the dole have had on our movement are not at present visible. For largely unrelated reasons there are currently no large-scale campaigns involving loads of people. There are very few protest sites now and those which there

are are smaller. The sort of activity that direct action people have been engaging in recently is more compatible with work; single big demos, one-day things etc.—not living up a tree for a year. It is possible that were there again to be a large campaign which would require people to be on the dole we would notice our depleted ranks more than at present.

## Working to Avoid Work

Not everyone can blag all the time, and the government is slowly catching up on our different blags. As a lot of people have come to realise lately, remaining on the sick is becoming increasingly difficult.<sup>8</sup> The government has even picked up on the phenomenon of the 'full-time politico' and has used it to cut our benefits by arguing that we can't be actively seeking work if we are involved in these sorts of activities. This has obviously been hard for them to prove unless they have got evidence of us living on site or otherwise engaged in some clearly 'full-time' activity.

But as people who have been 'PANSIED' (Politically Active Not Seeking Employment—apparently one of the dole office's official categories!) at various protest sites have found out, it is even possible for them to overcome this barrier. At the Manchester Airport protests in 1997, the dole office tried a new strategy. They simply matched up the signing records to where different sites had been (e.g. someone who had suspiciously moved between Exeter, Newbury and Manchester), and attempted to cut people's dole on the basis that they weren't actively seeking work. (In this case, the protesters were able to successfully argue that they were religious and not political activists, threatening to take the DSS to court if they didn't give everybody their dole back.) In November 1999, a similar thing happened to 15 activists who had been living on or associated with the Gorse Wood site in Essex—only this time it seems that it came about through co-operation between the dole office and police intelligence, as people who had been spotted on site but weren't actually living there were amongst the 15 who got







*Poster for a national unemployed demonstration against the French welfare scheme to be held in Perpignan, the French South coast unemployment blackspot (The Costa del Dole—sound familiar?).*

their dole money stopped on the basis that they were fraudulently claiming benefits.

In general, then, while a given individual might be able to blag for a certain amount of time, the government is always seeking to close these loopholes. Blags that existed in the 1980s dole heyday no longer exist; and by the same token, today's blags will eventually be snuffed out: you can run but you can't hide!

The inherently temporary nature of dole-blags means that the search for new blags becomes an objective in itself. But a culture of blagging—blagging as an end in itself—has side-effects upon ourselves and what we are striving to do as a movement. The need to find individual blags can obscure the overall situation in which we are all having to channel our creativity in these ways. It is as if this culture of blagging has taken on a life of its own, to the extent that we become blind to the overall facts of the situation. It is as if we are so used to being on the receiving end of countless state attacks, that we have given up on trying to collectively resist them and instead pat ourselves on the backs when we have found a new way of fiddling them individually.

But whilst we pat each other on the back for all our scheming, the government has meanwhile succeeded in getting what the Conservatives could only have dreamt of: in a very short space of time they have managed to dispose of the idea of passive claimants, and made it into an active process. Only five years ago we could have sat back content in the knowledge that if we wanted a life of leisure (if a rather low-budget one) all we had to do was to show up at the dole office every fortnight. Now, if not actively seeking work, we are actively avoiding work. And this in itself has become a full-time occupation.

In fact, the extent to which the culture of blagging has taken on a momentum of its own also becomes obvious in our relation to work. Whereas the whole alternative scene of the 1980s and 90s was accompanied by an anti-work ethic—a sentiment carried forward into the direct action scene today—it seems that our idealisation of blagging has gone so far that we are even willing to

do a bit of work if this becomes necessary. This has become clear in cases where our fake placements actually expect us to help out by playing on the good old unwritten rules of 'favour for favour'—a crude form of what can only be termed moralistic blackmailing that most of us might be annoyed by, but are nevertheless willing to accept. In effect, although blagging was only supposed to be a means to avoid work, we have conceded to working in the name of blagging.

## Assets to Globalisation

In addition, the resourcefulness of people around the direct action scene has also helped the implementation of the recent attacks on all claimants. One of the major problems the government has encountered in implementing their Welfare to Work schemes has been that of finding the necessary amount of placements needed for the people they still haven't managed to push into a job on the Gateway stage of the New Deal. This might at first seem strange as from the employer's point of view New Deal placements would seem like an offer they couldn't possibly resist. Here's the deal: get people on the New Deal to work for you for free. And don't worry, there's no catch. You don't even have to commit yourself to employing them afterwards. As soon as the 6 month period of free labour is up, you just get rid of them and take on some new 'trainees'. However, if there is one thing that employers like less than paying £3.60 an hour to their employees, it is having workers they can't even rely on to show up, let alone do 'an honest day's work', hence the cautious take-up rate for the New Deal placement schemes. So by finding our own 'placements' we are helping the government in one of the tasks they have found most difficult to complete. Insofar as these are soft placements, this is obviously not a direct substitute for what the state would have wanted, but it increases the success rate of New Deal placements, hence giving it more credibility.

More importantly though, finding placements (real or otherwise) serves to justify putting more pressure on all other claimants who might not be as resourceful or have as many (green) middle class connections as some people in the direct action scene do. Measures such as the New Deal and the Welfare Reform Act have actually met substantial passive resistance from most claimants, which is exactly why the government has decided to increase some of its sanctions lately. But if there are claimants who, before even being forced into a placement, continually manage to find their own, as well as successfully completing them without any complaints from either the claimant or the 'placement provider', it obviously legitimises putting more pressure on the remaining claimants. They appear less co-operative



The seemingly boundless resourcefulness of people around the direct action scene does mean that we have avoided what was otherwise depicted as a doom and gloom scenario of welfare reform being a serious threat to the movement. But not only does it require more and more work for us to simply avoid being forced off the dole, but our continuous blags have also had the effect of justifying increased pressure on other claimants. Maybe more importantly though, it seems to have made us blind to the overall picture of why and how the state chooses to attack us. We constantly talk about the evils of globalisation and neo-liberalism, but when we actually experience what that means in Britain in our own lives we don't even seem to notice, let alone do anything about it except as individuals. Yet individual solutions are effectively collective problems. The 'welfare reform' we have seen the government pursuing for the past three years has entailed attacks on the benefits of different groups, one at a time (single parents, the disabled, under 25s etc.); the government has been careful not to attack everyone at once for fear of prompting collective resistance. By using individual solutions such as blagging we are relying on the atomised and fragmented climate they are seeking to create and therefore just playing into their hands. As mentioned, 'globalisation' has been one concept the direct action movement has drawn upon in order to overcome the fragmentation of struggles. Yet, since globalisation is actually about the re-imposition of work, and since the struggle within and against work is part of our daily existence, the concrete link we really need to make is between global capital and our own experience of being pressured to work. Individual blagging, when posited as the principal solution to the attack on benefits, only serves to further the very globalisation we are supposedly resisting in our trips to Prague or Seattle. Blagging isn't against globalisation; it is part of it. ★

- 1) See the pamphlet *Dole autonomy versus the re-imposition of work: Analysis of the current tendency to workfare in the UK* by Aufheben. (Available for £1.50 Europe/£2 elsewhere (including postage) from: Aufheben, c/o BHUWC, 4 Crestway Parade, Hollingdean, Brighton BN1 7BL, UK.)
- 2) The New Deal for 18-24 year olds entails four 'options': subsidised employment, study or training, work in the 'voluntary' sector or work on the 'Environmental Task Force'. Refusing the 'options' can mean a benefit sanction.
- 3) See 'Globalisation: Origins—History—Analysis—Resistance' in *Do or Die No. 8*.

- 
- TAKE STUFF FROM WORK!**
- IT'S THE BEST WAY TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR JOB.**
- NEVER BUY PENS OR PENCILS OR PAPER! TAKE THEM FROM WORK.**
- RUBBER BANDS, PAPERCLIPS, TACKLES?**
- TAKE THEM FROM WORK!**
- WHY BUY A FILING CABINET?**
- WHY NOT A PERSONAL COMPUTER OR WORD PROCESSOR?**
- TAKE THEM FROM WORK!**
- I TOOK A WHOLE DESK FROM THE LAST PLACE I WORKED - THEY NEVER NOTICED - AND IT'S GREAT IN MY APARTMENT!**
- TAKE STUFF FROM WORK!**
- IT'S YOUR DUTY AS AN OPPRESSED WORKER TO STEAL FROM YOUR EMPLOYER!**
- STOP**
- IT'S GOING TO BE AN OUTSTANDING DAY!**
- TAKE STUFF FROM WORK! - AND GIVE UP YOUR COMPANY TIME! - I NEED IT THIS AT WORK - THEN I'LL BE PUTTING ME TO WRITE ABOUT STUFF I STEAL FROM THEM!**
- LIFE IS GOOD**



*Do or Die presents a Cautionary Tale entitled*  
**"The Ballad of the Black Hooded Top"**  
*or "Why you shouldn't confuse your politics with your dress sense"*

I used to be a decent girl—polite and modest in my ways.  
I'm sure my friends at church then thought perhaps that I would end my days

A teacher—ballet dancer—paying taxes—doing well.  
A law-abiding citizen. Alas! Alack! Oh well!  
I came to Britain backpacking as young Australians will  
(You're meant to then go straight back home and pay your visa bill.)  
As I meant to—but one day—'cos your weather's rather silly  
Though I was wearing all my clothes, I found my ears were chilly.

I looked right—hmm, McDonalds. Then left—an army shop.  
I walked on in—then walked on out—in a NEW BLACK HOODED TOP.

Wait—just a moment. I feel—odd. The world seems new and strange...  
McDonalds! Planet murderers! I must—FIGHT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE!  
I owe the power-mongers nothing! I see it all now, bright and clear!  
I want a free and joyous world. I've drawn the line: I'm starting here.

So it began. My old life—done. I live as if I was possessed.  
In a bender—digger diving—up a tree... under arrest.

I learnt to swear at bailiffs! (Bastards.) Never could quite swear before.  
Seems to come quite naturally when they beat down your treehouse door.  
Not where to start, but where to stop—why stop? One life is all you've got.  
"No more roads"—I'm locking on to anything that moves—or not.

Food for free—it's in the forest—in the supermarket too  
Richard Branson has donated free train travel, just for you.  
Found out I've lots to say, once started—Corporate dinners? Up for them.  
Talented at table dancing—give that girl an AGM!

And then—I had my day in court. The best-dressed activists get off  
Their charges (or else with each other)—so: dress on, and hoody off.  
Wait—once again—I feel quite strange—oh dear, the judge is not amused.  
With my hoody, well I'm hardcore—but without—I'm just CONFUSED.

Umm—what exactly am I doing? Did you say I broke the law?  
Wait, it's coming back—but faintly—what did I believe before?  
Somehow, my conviction's lacking—I start to speak, but have to stop.  
Did I leave my ideals lying back there with my hooded top?

Well, I've remembered them. No matter what, the truth is true.  
And once you know, you can't go back and think as you used to.  
But: I'm giving up my hoody. I wear skirts now. That's progress.  
(This? Doesn't count—it's knitted, and it's nicked from M&S.)

Don't get me wrong—it has its uses. You know them, I won't specify.  
And I must admit I'd wear one to be the cover girl on *Do or Die*.  
But in the end, I've learnt my lesson: hooded tops are but a fashion.  
Trends will come and trends will go...  
My revolution's based on PASSION!





November 30th 1999



# Resisting the WTO



The mobilisation against the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which took place in Seattle in November 1999 has been hailed across the globe as a victory. For four days tens of thousands brought chaos to the streets of Seattle, shutting down the Conference's opening ceremony, defying the National Guard and braving the tear gas. Meanwhile people across the globe were taking co-ordinated action against a common enemy: the neoliberal economy.

**Capitalism? No Thanks!  
We will burn your fucking banks!**



# November 30th, 1999

## A Global Day of Action, Resistance and Carnival

What follows is the original proposal for the Global Day of Action on Tuesday November 30th 1999, the first day of the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation which took place in Seattle, Washington, USA. The proposal was drafted, debated and amended on the June 18th (J18) e-mail discussion list and distributed across the globe.

### November 30th, 1999

#### A Global Day of Action, Resistance, and Carnival Against the Global Capitalist System

Activists from diverse groups and movements around the world are discussing, networking and organising for an INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION on November 30th. On this day, officials of 150 governments will meet in Seattle for the 3rd conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), at which they will decide on new policies that will further escalate the exploitation of our planet and its people by the global capitalist system. Thus, there will be attempts to push through a new version of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), strengthen intellectual property rights, and further neoliberalisation through a new round of free trade talks.

A coalition of radical ACTIVISTS has been formed in Seattle to stage actions against the conference, and activist groups around the world are planning to converge on the city. Also, at their conferences this summer, the International Workers of the World (IWW) and the international Peoples' Global Action (PGA) network endorsed and began to plan ACTIONS AGAINST THE WTO around the world. Meanwhile, various grassroots groups prepare to take action in their own parts of the world in recognition that the CAPITALIST SYSTEM, based on the exploitation of people, societies and the environment for the profit of a few, is the PRIME CAUSE of present SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL TROUBLES.

In view of these developments, we now call for SYMPATHETIC COMMUNITIES, GRASSROOTS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS around the world to organise their OWN AUTONOMOUS ACTIONS, protests, and carnivals against the capitalist system on November 30th.

Our simultaneous TRANSFORMATION OF THE CAPITALIST SOCIAL ORDER around the world—in



the streets, neighbourhoods, fields, factories, offices, commercial centres, financial districts and so on, would contribute to the process of bringing separate struggles together and BUILDING ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES based on co-operation, ecological sustainability, and grassroots democracy.

This call is made in the spirit of continuing the process of building a strong, bold and CREATIVE GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT against the economic and political institutions of capitalism. For as we realise that no issue is isolated, be it exploitation of workers, the peasant farmers going bankrupt, the indigenous peoples getting displaced by 'development' programmes or our environment being destroyed, we also realise that we must act together and UNITE OUR STRUGGLES AGAINST the social, political, and economic institutions of THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM. Only a strong and united movement of grassroots groups who struggle independent of these institutions and seek to effect change directly through their own autonomous action can dissolve their power and BUILD A BETTER SOCIAL ORDER based on grassroots organisation.

Our simultaneous occupation and transformation of economic centres around the globe on November 30th, and our preparations leading up to this, would be an essential contribution to the process of making local, national, and international connections. The day would BRING DIFFERENT MOVEMENTS TOGETHER in solidarity with one another and strengthen the mutual bonds of otherwise disparate groups—workers, the unemployed, students, trade unionists, peasants, the landless, fishers, womens' groups, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, peace activists, environmental activists, ecologists and so on.



This process will be continued through **FURTHER GLOBAL DAYS OF ACTION IN THE FUTURE**, **MAYDAY 2000** for instance, has been called by a London collective, and endorsed by PGA and other collectives and networks, as a perfect symbolic and real opportunity to escalate our resistance globally. The proposal and contact information can be found at

<http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k/second.htm>, and there is an Internet discussion listserve already operating at: [mayday2000\\_subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:mayday2000_subscribe@egroups.com)

The **PRESENT PROPOSAL** of a November 30th global day of action **FOLLOWS** from the success of the co-ordinated global day of action on **JUNE 18TH** this year, and is intended to expand on it in the same spirit. On that day, separate grassroots movements in over 30 countries on all continents worked together and **JOINED FORCES AGAINST THE GLOBAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM**. The day saw for instance marches by workers in Bangladesh and Pakistan; a fake trade fair by Uruguayan activists; thousands of people in a carnival in London's financial district; occupations and street parties in Spain, Italy, USA, and Canada; ten thousand people in Nigeria protesting the oil industry and imperialism; and, in Melbourne, a prominent politician hit with a cream pie and a logging multinational blockaded with dead wombats. (For more information, see:

[www.infoshop.org/june18.html](http://www.infoshop.org/june18.html) and [www.i18.org](http://www.i18.org))

The November 30th global day of action would be organised in a non-hierarchical way, as a **DECENTRALISED AND INFORMAL NETWORK** of autonomous groups that struggle for solidarity and co-operation while employing non-authoritarian, grassroots democratic forms of organisation. Each event or **ACTION** would be **ORGANISED AUTONOMOUSLY BY EACH GROUP**, while coalitions of various movements and groups could be formed at the local, regional, and national levels. A strategy that may be useful at the local level is that various groups co-operate in creating a surrounding **ATMOSPHERE OF CARNIVAL** and festivity as a setting for their various actions. Examples of conceivable actions are:

street parties, strikes, handing out flyers, street theatre, pickets, demonstrations, occupations of offices, blockades and shutdowns, building gardens, speeches, appropriation and disposal of luxury consumer goods, critical mass bike rides, banner hangings, sabotaging, wrecking, or interfering with capitalist infrastructure, carnivals, appropriating capitalist wealth and returning it to the working people, handing out free food, mock trade fairs, marches, music, dancing, solidarity actions, declaring oneself independent from global capitalism and authoritarian governments, setting up grassroots community councils and holding

meetings outside city halls, setting up economic alternatives, like workers co-operatives offering no interest loans outside major banks, reclaiming space (streets, government land, office buildings, etc.) for living, playing, etc., free distribution of community controlled newspapers.

Your **INITIATIVE AND PARTICIPATION**, no matter how small, are crucial to the success of the November 30th day of action in your location. This proposal needs to be spread and discussed, perhaps translated; meetings need to be organised; **EVENTS PLANNED**; leaflets printed and distributed; funds raised; laughter and conversation shared. If you, or your group, plan actions on November 30th, please let others know as soon as possible, to **FACILITATE NETWORKING** and communication, as well as international media efforts. Please send your contact information to: [N30@visto.com](mailto:N30@visto.com)

Your contact information may be included in an international contacts list. The more detailed information you send (land address, phone number, fax number, email address), the better it is, but, for your own security, please do not include any contact information that you prefer not to be made public.



We expect to **COMMUNICATE INTERNATIONALLY PRIMARILY BY EMAIL**, and so encourage all groups and individuals who plan to take action to subscribe to suitable mailing lists, and in general make efforts to **STAY IN TOUCH** through this and other means. There is a list of available mailing lists in the appendix below. Please join one, and **SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS** and plans with the rest of us. This proposal has been translated into **TEN LANGUAGES**, which will be necessary for future proposals and reports as well. If you can help with translations, please keep in touch via the N30 listserve or the N30 email at: [N30@visto.com](mailto:N30@visto.com)

Please **FORWARD THIS PROPOSAL** to appropriate lists and to people who will be interested, reproduce it and circulate, put it on a web-site, and most importantly, **ACT. ★**

**NOVEMBER 30 GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION COLLECTIVE**

**N30 c/o IWW, 5215 Ballard, NW Seattle, WA. 98107, USA.**



# Stateless in Seattle



**What follows is the text of a recently completed email interview with a woman who has been involved in Earth First! (EF!) in the States over the past few years and was involved in the mobilisation against the WTO last year. What took place in Seattle has inspired people across the globe. It is hoped that this interview, and the accompanying articles, will help to increase the understanding of what happened over those few days last winter, whilst demystifying the process which allowed the Seattle events to unfold in the way that they did.**

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was founded in 1993 to regulate international commerce. It replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was established shortly after World War II to negotiate agreements over the reduction of barriers to trade between nations. GATT was only ever intended to be a temporary institution, but the failure of the world's elite to create the International Trade Organisation (ITO) in 1950 resulted in GATT becoming a de facto permanent organisation.

However, during the Uruguay Round of GATT (1986-1993) it was decided that a new, permanent institution was needed to continue the work that GATT had started—and so the WTO was born. The key concepts of all GATT agreements were carried directly over into the WTO. These are reflected in its general mission: insurance of market access, the promotion of competition and the encouragement of economic development.

In May 1998—coinciding with the 50th anniversary of GATT—the Second Ministerial Conference of the WTO took place in Geneva, Switzerland. The Conference was massively resisted by 15,000 people from across Europe who converged on the city, smashing bank windows, overturning the Director General's car and initiating three days of the heaviest rioting Geneva had ever seen. Eighteen months later in November 1999 the WTO was to hold its Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle, Washington. Again, the Ministerial was not to pass uncontested...

## **How it all Began**

**What was the general idea underlying the proposal for the day of action on November 30 (N30)?**

Because of the minimal level of international organising which happened, I don't even know how important the official proposal was. But, before the



proposal, when activists in Seattle found out about the WTO meeting, they started putting the word out. The basic idea underlying the mobilisation was to offer some serious resistance to the WTO. We didn't know who would join us or how many.

Rumours, whispers, information about the global resistance to institutions like the IMF (International Monetary Fund), World Bank, MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) etc. inspired people to take action against the WTO. The global street party in May 1998 helped people in my corner of the world to see the forest through the tree-sits.

**Which groups were originally involved in planning for the mobilisation against the WTO and how and when did the Direct Action Network (DAN) come about?**

The first I heard about it was from Earth Firsters in Seattle. There's not many of them, but they were the first people from the direct action community who were talking about it. As far as I know, the official proposal came from people who were working together through the J18 e-mail discussion list. And of course, the big NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and non-profits knew what was happening.

I first heard of DAN in maybe July 1999, but that was through a set of detailed meeting notes so it had clearly already had a good start by then. I do believe that the Direct Action Network was the brainchild of some people involved in a group called Art and Revolution from the Bay Area of Northern California. I think they knew something about the embryonic stages of organising in Seattle and used DAN as a way to pull other groups and people in. I believe they wanted a way for people who do direct action to work together. They contacted different non-profits like Ruckus, Art and Revolution, the Seattle EFers, Global Exchange, the National Lawyers Guild and came up with the umbrella of DAN. Or so the story goes...

**Did this broad coalition of groups create any problems during the early stages of organising for the day of action?**

Things didn't go as smoothly as planned, of course. There was a big disagreement about when DAN should have its action. I never quite heard the definitive truth, but my understanding is that people couldn't agree on when to have it because of problems with the AFL-CIO (Association of Federated Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations, basically, the American equivalent of the UK's Trade Union Congress). There was a back and forth between DAN and the AFL about who decided on N30 first and who should step back. If my understanding is correct, I don't think people really talked about both events being on the same

day as a good thing. Also, a couple of groups threw money around to shape the action the way they wanted it to be. Later still, certain sponsoring groups were accused of being too involved or controlling.

**I understand that there were action 'guidelines', could you explain what they were?**

Some people felt that in order to mobilise large numbers of 'regular' Janes and Joes, there had to be action agreements setting out appropriate behaviour on the day of action. Groups and individuals involved with DAN were asked to take action on N30 based on the agreement that:

- 1. We will use no violence, physical or verbal towards any person
- 2. We will carry no weapons
- 3. We will not bring or use any alcohol or illegal drugs
- 4. We will not destroy property."

**How were the guidelines decided upon, and by whom?**

That's always been a little unclear to me. At one point, when it was mostly non-profits and NGOs, it was agreed to. I think it may also have been agreed to at the Ruckus action camp, but I'm not sure about that.

**Who are the Ruckus Society?**

The Ruckus Society runs non-violent direct action training camps. An old EFer, Mike Roselle, started the group about six or so years ago. They hold camps for people interested in or working on different issues, i.e. human rights, globalisation,







*"I wish every town could be like Seattle"—  
Michael Moore, Director General of the WTO,  
shortly before the city erupts into rioting.*

East Timor, and teach them basic direct action skills. They held one before Seattle called 'Globalise This!' In Seattle, they worked with affinity groups to get them trained in specific skills, mostly blockading.

#### **So, did these action guidelines create any problems?**

Yes, I believe it was problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was a consensus reached by a small fraction of the number of people who participated and the potential number of people who might have participated. Secondly, they were treated as 'rules' and used as the excuse to marginalise, yell at, hit and be mean to people who did not follow them. Thirdly, they were at odds with the values of many people who worked a great deal on organising for the WTO meetings, both within and outside of DAN.

#### **Did these problems show irreconcilable differences between the groups that made up the Direct Action Network?**

Irreconcilable, no. And not really for the groups involved, as most of the non-profits felt that the action agreements were necessary (image and funding being important considerations).

It tends to be the case that radicals and anarchists here don't organise as non-profits, groups, endorsers, etc. The action agreements did create extreme divisions within the community of

people doing the work. But, because of what happened on N30, people have had to rethink their position on property destruction. There were some changes for the better in the April 16th mobilisation against the World Bank/IMF meeting in Washington DC. For example, a lot of people have come to realise that there will be outrage to the extent of property damage one way or another. Now, people who wanted to make rules against that outrage talk about co-ordinating tactics. It would be better if they'd give up on the whole concept of control in the first place, but this is a step in the right direction.

**I have heard that the guidelines were prefixed with a preamble explaining that they were not a set of moral or philosophical judgements, but a common set of agreements to allow a broad coalition of groups to work together. Could you explain briefly what the preamble was and the function you think it fulfilled?**

Yes, true. There was a preamble. I think that every person who helped craft the guidelines hoped sincerely that they would be used in a positive way. But many of those people also see the ways in which they weren't. One of the main organisers in Seattle, who was part of those first decisions, really agonised about the way the guidelines were interpreted as laws laid down for every day of action. The Direct Action Network, technically, was only calling for non-violent direct action on N30. There was no prescription for any other type of action on any other day. That they were laid down like the letter of the law despite the intentions of those who consented to them shows how entrenched the cult of non-violence is.

#### **Was there a parallel mobilisation against the WTO which came from an explicitly anarchist perspective?**

Not surprisingly, the explicitly anarchist mobilisation against the WTO was more loosely organised than the Direct Action Network. Seattle Anarchist Response (SAR) really just started to get its feet under itself a couple of weeks before N30. If SAR had been a little more structured earlier in the game, a lot of the energy that went begrudgingly into the DAN mobilisation would have flowed naturally to SAR. That's the inheritance of our political history; people want to be 'plugged in' instead of figuring out the whole thing themselves. SAR and other unaffiliated anarchists were responsible for some of the best aspects of N30, including the mass public squat across from a police station, other, smaller squats around the city, an infoshop, the Reclaim the Streets attempt on N30, and some great propaganda. Plus, SAR meetings were way more functional than most. Instead of trying to control the expenditure of



group energy. SAR was just people who got together, shared ideas and resources and moved forward. Or backwards. Or sideways if necessary. Or not at all.

As usual, 'the anarchists' weren't wearing special tags identifying themselves, their ideas and their organisational ties. They helped paint the Independent Media Centre, facilitate DAN meetings, run non-violence workshops, make signs, check email, answer phones. It doesn't sound as sexy to say that, and it doesn't play well with the media.

## Preparation Pays Off

### How was the day of action publicised?

Many tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of the postcard advertising N30 and the convergence were printed. Lots of posters and graffiti, a road-show, through the mass media, etc. A broadsheet was also produced. This was a four page newspaper that originally ran in the *Earth First! Journal*. Copies were sent all over the country and I believe that was the first printed material that a lot of people had about November 30.

### How was information about the role of the WTO communicated to people?

Actually, we should have done more educating. It seemed like there was a gap in the information produced about the WTO. There was a lot of simplistic stuff, you know, "The WTO is a bunch of unelected corporate lawyers who always eat sea turtles for dinner," and some very detailed stuff. There wasn't enough for people who wanted to know more than generalities or issue-specific information without getting into dense briefings. I wish we had talked more about the actual operations of the WTO, i.e. what it would mean if the whole ministerial reached an impasse.

Seattle has two newspapers, one called the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer (PI)*. Because it was a fair certainty that the *PI*'s coverage of the protests wasn't going to cut it, a fairly accurate replica of the cover of the paper (entitled the *Seattle Post-Intelligence*) was produced with the type of information you don't normally read in the corporate press. It combined solid information with a fairly biting sarcasm about the standard operating procedure of institutions like the WTO. In the USA, most newspapers are available for sale from boxes in the street. You simply drop the correct amount of money into a slot and the door opens giving you access to all of the papers. The system kind of relies on trust by assuming that most people will only take one paper. Anyway, one morning people went out and wrapped the spoof covers around thousands of copies of the regular paper that were being distributed through these boxes. It worked really well.

An effort was also made to distribute information about the corporations behind the WTO meeting in Seattle. On a day like J18, where you are targeting the Group of Eight (G8) in a place like the City of London, the corporate connections are fairly obvious. But very few people realised that the corporate connections in Seattle were just as blatant. That meeting was bought and paid for by Microsoft and Boeing. Seattle's two biggest industries (and exporters) long before anyone showed up. They were giving delegates official tours of their plants and shit. They ponied up millions of dollars. So, anyway, there was a corporate research guide floating around that drew the connections between the corporate sponsors of the WTO, their financial interests in 'free trade' and their cosy relationship with US trade negotiators.

In part, those publications were inspired by similar things around J18. In part, they were just good ideas and the natural thing to do.



## Structure, Tactics and Training

### Could you give an overview of the DAN sponsored event that took place on the morning of November 30?

Tuesday morning at some ghastly hour, 7.00am or something, two marches started from two different meeting places near downtown. A circle was drawn on a map of the core of downtown Seattle with the Washington Trade and Convention Centre in the middle. Affinity groups and clusters of affinity groups split the circle into pie-shaped wedges, chose one for themselves and agreed to blockade their piece of the pie.

### How were affinity groups formed for the day and how were they prepared for taking action?

In all of the publicity, activists were encouraged to form affinity groups. In the week running up to November 30, during the skill sharing 'Convergence', people were also encouraged to form themselves into affinity groups. Some groups already knew what was up and prepared themselves. A lot were taught blockading



## JUST SAY NO TO THE WTO



**CARNIVAL AGAINST CAPITAL!**  
SEATTLE, NOV.29-DEC.3, 1999

techniques by the Ruckus Society, through the Direct Action Network. On the day some affinity groups blockaded. Some were roving bands to reinforce blockades elsewhere. The medics worked as an affinity group. Some were focused on the parade and puppets.

**What was the affinity group spokescouncil and what role did it play in co-ordinating the action?**

Once the convergence started, affinity groups were asked to send a spokesperson to a daily spokescouncil. The council was the means for official information sharing and action planning. For example, each affinity group asked for and was assigned a piece of the pie through the spokescouncil. By the time that the affinity groups rolled into town, certain fundamentals of the action had already been determined, i.e., that it would be focused downtown, that it would largely be done with blockades, etc. The affinity groups, working through the spokescouncil, figured out the details after the main thrust and direction had been determined.

**Was there room given for affinity groups that did not accept the action guidelines to take part in the affinity group spokescouncil?**

No.

**What dynamic did this create?**

A lack of co-ordination. A lack of communication. Resentments. Marginalisation. But, the dynamic wasn't really created by the inability to work together through the spokescouncil. It started sooner than that, I believe, because some people wouldn't believe that there would be any 'troublemakers'.

To a large degree, the whole notion of direct action has become synonymous with Earth First! on the West Coast, although there are a lot of other people doing it of course. However, there are very few places where Earth Firsters have a non-violence code as strict as the DAN action agreements. There was never any question that Earth First! would be central to WTO organising, so the idea that people would be using fairly patented Earth First! techniques while pissing on the movement's spirit of anti-authoritarianism and tactical flexibility was doomed. Whether or not the people involved in the decision realised it, they stepped in a pile when they outlawed sabotage.

**When you use the term 'troublemakers' what do you mean? Is this a kind of affectionate term for naughty types who wanted to trash stuff, or do you mean people deliberately trying to disrupt the process that DAN set into action for no real reason?**

If a pejorative value has to be assigned to those who make trouble, I generally consider the sort affectionately. I can't think of a clearer term right now. Ruffians, hooligans, riff-raff, the undesirables, vandals, anarchists, saboteurs. Saboteurs maybe.

**How successful do you think the spokescouncil was in decentralising decision making and control over the action?**

Some of the most fundamental decisions had already been made by the time the spokescouncil started meeting. Of course, certain conceptual decisions had to be made in order to bring people together in the first place. For example, the idea of bringing thousands of people together to engage in direct action to try and shut down the meetings couldn't have waited, and that was pretty fundamental.

**"The enemies of Capitalism will be back"—Editorial comment in *The Times*, June 19th 1999. It seems they were correct.**

But certain aspects of the action were presented as 'just the way things are' when they didn't need to be. From my perspective, street blockades downtown weren't the only way to try and shut down the meetings. I'd guess that for people without a lot of experience, the decision to hold hands, lockdown or set up a tripod was pretty important. I wish experienced affinity groups had been encouraged to do something other than lockdowns. I think the failure to think outside of the very narrow range of actions which we typically engage in was more about tactical laziness than centralising decision-making power though.

That was the sort of level of decision making which the spokescouncil facilitated. Also, it's important not to forget that the council was at least as much a means for communicating as for decision making.

I have to say though that, as someone who was vocal about the means through which radicals were being marginalised throughout the process, I have been surprised by the backlash against the spokescouncil. Certainly, the vast majority of people were happy enough with the spokescouncil as a decentralised tool of decision making that it's



being used again in DC, but when an older, lefty, pro-democracy group in my town suggested using it recently for something else, there was a visceral reaction against it by the anarchist community which surprised me. It must not have been very empowering for them.

**Could you explain what the 'scenario group' was?**

Before the beginning of the convergence, the scenario group tried to put things in order to facilitate actions by affinity groups coming to town just before the action. Unfortunately, the scenario group sort of transformed into a tactical group closer to N30. This tactical group was actually meant to share information and make suggestions to the affinity groups based on the communications system. When we agreed to it, it was very explicit that the group was not meant to wield decision-making authority. I don't know how well it worked on the day, but during the rest of the week, it became a vehicle for a very small group of people attempting to exert control over the crowd.

**The Big Day Finally Arrives**

**You started to explain what took place on the morning of November 30. It would be interesting to continue with that. What was the general atmosphere at each of the meeting points and how did the cops initially respond to the crowd?**

I've heard that there were maybe a thousand to two thousand at each one. The atmosphere was definitely one of anticipation and suspense at the meeting point I attended. It was all pretty good-

natured though. The cops were being fairly chilled out. There weren't too many of them and they were just kind of wandering around amongst the crowd in a pretty unthreatening way. Despite it still being before dawn it was pretty colourful. People dressed up as sea-turtles, waving pretty banners, holding puppets and carrying a giant inflatable whale. There were a few very small groups of black-clad folks hanging around even this early on. Some were holding banners proclaiming stuff like 'Vegan Revolution!', others were distributing leaflets encouraging people to ignore the DAN action guidelines and think for themselves about what was appropriate behaviour, others were just hanging around looking a bit self-conscious. Shortly after meeting, the crowds departed and made their way in a procession towards the Convention Centre to establish their blockades.

**How were the blockades established at the intersections surrounding the Convention Centre?**

Each affinity group or cluster had a different deployment plan. Some of the affinity groups were busted on their way downtown. I know one group of people were walking around with big raincoats, trying to look inconspicuous with lock boxes tucked here and there. Some of the blockades, I believe, were just masses of people from the march holding hands.

**How effective do you think the blockades were in stopping the delegates from entering the Convention Centre?**





I've heard that the Convention Centre was almost empty when the opening ceremony was supposed to start, which clearly wasn't the plan. I think the main factor was that the cops did not control the streets, and the real big wigs couldn't leave their hotels. The hotels were all in walking distance of the meeting site, so the blockades couldn't really stop individual delegates from getting in. But vehicles couldn't get through many intersections. And people like Madeline Albright, the Secretary of State, and the US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky didn't feel that



the streets were safe enough for them. I read actually that Albright was the one who insisted that the National Guard be called in. She asked for it even earlier in the day, but the Mayor wouldn't do it.

Altogether it was a pretty surreal scene. There were dudes in suits and delegate badges walking around, mingling with the protesters. I've seen footage actually of a delegate who pulled a gun. I've heard pretty definitively that it happened twice. No one was stopping him from doing whatever he wanted, and with a little cunning, any delegate could have reached the opening ceremony. But that just isn't the way these things operate.

#### **Were all of the blockades successful?**

No. The police used brutality to break some of them up and reclaim different parts of downtown.

#### **At what point did the police attempt to move the blockaders?**

It's my understanding that the police were trying to maintain a corridor from the big hotels through to the Convention Centre and Paramount Theatre, where the opening ceremony was to be held. When they didn't have their corridor, they started gassing. I've also heard that in one instance they might have started gassing when something was thrown from the crowd.

#### **How successful were the police in clearing roads?**

Not good enough. I believe that their main problem was that they ran out of gas.

#### **Were any attempts made to break through police lines?**

I haven't heard of any instance in which people crossed police lines when the police didn't want them to.

#### **Why do you think this was?**

I would say that, for the most part, no attempts were made to cross police lines because pigs are scary. The cops were balancing the need to establish a perimeter with the imperative of maintaining shopping as usual in downtown. Perhaps their perimeter wasn't big enough because the blockades outside of them shut down the ceremony. I've heard rumours of a much larger perimeter in DC. Since the police have done quite a lot of debriefing over what went wrong in Seattle, I see a change in this regard as an acknowledgement that they fucked up.

Crossing police lines just wasn't really necessary. Also, some people were deliberately avoiding the police.

#### **What other events or demonstrations took place on November 30?**

The big labour march. The People's Assembly march. The black bloc. The RTS (Reclaim the Streets). Free Tibet's thing.

#### **Do you think that they complemented the blockades, adding to the chaotic nature of the event, or that they detracted attention from those trying to shut down the Conference?**

Chaos prevailed on N30. To say that all these events 'complemented' each other would be to

"In so many ways the WTO protesters and the ministers who had to put up with them so richly deserve each other. It is hard to say which was worse—watching the militant dunces parade their ignorance through the streets of Seattle, or listening to their lame-brained governments respond to their 'arguments'. No, take that back, the second was worse. At least the rioters had a good time."—'Clueless in Seattle', *The Economist*.



imply that the chaos was deliberate or planned. But, clearly, they all added up to November 30, whatever that was, a very strange day which prevented the WTO delegates from meeting.

**You mentioned the AFL-CIO earlier and you've just said again about the big labour march. Did they take part in the shut-down or offer support to those being gassed?**

The AFL held a big rally earlier in the day at the Seattle Centre, a good walk from downtown and the Convention Centre. Afterwards, they started marching along a pre-designated circular route negotiated with the city. The route abutted the centre of activities, the north-west part of downtown—which, coincidentally, was the primary area of vandalism. The march was really big, by far the largest contingent of people. Not a lot of people know, by the way, that many of the reported 30,000 union members and supporters were compensated for travel expenses and lost wages. When that many more people were thrown into downtown, it added a lot of energy at a pretty crucial point in the day, when spirits might have drooped otherwise. But the 'marshals' of the march stuck to their pre-determined route and herded the workers away. It must have been pretty crazy to get all riled up about the justness of the cause at a rally, be led on a march to an amazing spectacle of direct action confronting a very high profile manifestation of the enemy, and then to be led away. Quite rightly, the rank and file wasn't having it. Many of them just abandoned the march and joined the blockades. I've heard stories about some of the more militant unions engaging in some sabotage as well.

## **The Black Bloc—Nice to see Young People Enjoying Themselves**

**What was the black bloc?**

Lots of people, dressed in black, fucking shit up.

**What exactly did it do?**

Break things.

**What relationship did the black bloc have to DAN?**

None.

**How was it formed?**

A very philosophical question. I would say the black bloc formed itself. Each person there looked for other people to run around with and fuck shit up. People tried to spread meeting points to one another.

**How many people was the bloc made up of?**

Two hundred people in black. This black bloc

had some fuzzy edges—lots of photographers, TV crews, security, medics, undercover cops, snatch squads.

**How did the police respond to them?**

Sometimes undercover cops waited for a critical mass of other cops and picked people out. Other times, people in the black bloc felt that the police were trying to form lines to box them in. For the most part, the cops were in the centre of the city, the blockaders were ringing them and the black bloc worked the outside.



**How did other people respond to them?**

The black bloc provoked extreme reactions, of support and disapproval. Every person who was there would characterise their general understanding of how the black bloc was received in a different way, depending on what they saw. They received a lot of support and a lot of disapproval. Some people shopping were totally intrigued. Some people were scared. Some street kids loved it. Some of the protesters hated it and tried to make it stop. Some of the protesters joined.

The most extreme reaction was from 'non-violent' protesters who felt personally assaulted. More than once, enraged individuals resorted to violence to try and stop another person from breaking something. I mean the hitting and kicking sort of violence, not the verbal type. That sucked.

**What roles do you think the bloc fulfilled?**

They broke things. They raised the stakes. They made the streets unsafe for the bigwigs. They created controversy. They vented rage. They looked good for the camera. They sent a message.

**How do you think it complemented or damaged the other events which took place on the day?**

Overall, I think what happened on November 30 was good. To take one part of what happened out of the context of that day and examine it and say, "Was this good or bad?" would imply a



superhuman understanding of a very complex series of interactions. The black bloc is part of the web of life perhaps.

Which is not to say that you can't generalise about what seems to have happened. Generally, the black bloc seemed to have been less important than the blockades at actually stopping the meetings. I also think the black bloc changed the message which was sent by the protests (to the delegates, the governments, the corporations, the media-viewing public and the international movement), whether or not people support the black bloc has a lot to do with whether they like the message and who they believe the affected audience was.

#### **What discussion or debate has the black bloc created post-N30?**

The black bloc definitely provoked a lot of discussion about the efficacy of property damage in mass protest, the use of action agreements, the effect in the media, etc. I believe so much attention has been given to this question that too little energy has gone into questioning other aspects of the day.

#### **How have the ideas behind the activities of some of those in the black bloc been expressed?**

There was a communiqué. Some graffiti. Interviews. Panels at conferences. It's a balancing act for them, the need to explain and the risk of exposing themselves to the Seattle Police Department crackdown.

#### **How usual is it for a black bloc to form, or be called for on demos or actions in North America?**

Much of what happened on N30 was highly unusual. It's not usual for us to gather over 50,000 people. I can't think of any instance when so many people have used direct action together. So the black bloc was pretty unprecedented too, though rioting is not an unknown phenomena in



"Sometime around noon, using the enormous crowds as cover, upwards of 180 black-clad anarchists threw a monkey-wrench into the plans of polite, middle class organizers... Those recognisable sounds of splintering glass soon made it clear the tenor of the WTO demonstration had changed." From *Anarchy*, Summer/Spring 2000

different parts of the country. Sabotage done by a mass of people during daylight is pretty unprecedented here. Maybe it will turn out to be precedent setting.

#### **Do you have any idea of the gender balance within the black bloc?**

No. A better question would be, "How extreme was the gender imbalance?" I have heard that it could have been worse. In some of the coverage since N30, the women in the black bloc have been cheated out of their due in pretty blatant ways. One very big trendy music magazine ran a long article about anarchy in the USA and used this beautiful picture of the black bloc marching down the street. The caption says something about the boys from Eugene, which is totally absurd since there are clearly a lot of women right in the front. Not to mention the absurdity of claiming that everyone in the photo is from Eugene. I think the really extreme gender imbalance became a problem at night, when the people breaking things were not there specifically to fuck with the corporate sponsors of the WTO. It was more of a scary, machismo, bad vibrational energy sort of thing then.

#### **The Empire Strikes Back!**

##### **How did the police respond to the crowd as the day drew on?**

Gas, gas, more gas. Then rubber bullets. Then, when evening was falling, the labour march had passed and the Direct Action Network called off its blockades, the cops advanced on those who remained. They ended up chasing pockets of rioters up from the waterfront area of downtown, onto Capitol Hill.

##### **At what point was the curfew announced, and what did it mean?**

A State of Emergency was declared by the Governor and then the Mayor, or some such thing.



allowing the forces that be to essentially impose elements of Martial Law. The downtown area was 'closed' at 7.00pm. Later, a 'no protest zone' was established for the duration of the week. The National Guard was called in. I imagine it was announced by the authorities at some point, but I heard it by word of mouth.

**What feeling did this create in the crowd?  
Excitement, fear, defeat, success...?**

It definitely inspired excitement and fear. Mostly, I think it just made people feel like, oh, yeah, this is real. For real, they are very angry. For me, it also added credibility to the fairly ambiguous rumours that the opening ceremony had been called off.

**What happened after the curfew was declared?**

I don't actually know how important the timing of the curfew was. They said, be out by this time, but they were advancing on the crowd sooner than that, trying to break blockades and stop the sabotage. By the time of the curfew, they were making headway and a lot of people were voluntarily leaving downtown. But even once the police had secured their curfew area perimeter, they kept going, chasing pockets of pared down and rowdy protesters up onto Capitol Hill.

**What proportion of the crowd left the downtown area?**

The vast majority was gone by 7.00pm. A lot of people left when the Direct Action Network pulled out around 5.00 or 5.30pm when it was getting dark.

FUCK  
COLUMBUS



RODNEY  
KING  
DISCOVERED  
AMERICA

**What happened on Capitol Hill later that night?**

Protesters coming up the hill were being gassed by the riot cops, followed by helicopters, etc. etc. The main street on Capitol Hill is Broadway, the main queer area of Seattle and a pretty vibrant neighbourhood with some nightlife. People coming from work, having dinner, walking their dogs, shopping, hanging out on their doorsteps were suddenly getting gassed. Some of them joined the angry crowd. The cops were engaged in a couple of different stand-offs. For the most part, people weren't targeting businesses at that point because it's not a rich area and the political consciousness of the crowd had changed. People focused all of their anger on the cops. Some people threw bottles at cop cars. Some people walked up to police lines and held hands or pushed flowers in the cops' faces.

**La Lucha Continua**

**What happened the following morning?**

I slept.

**OK, me too. So, from what you heard, how was the general atmosphere of the crowd different to how it had been the previous day?**

I believe that people in the crowd were much more focused on police brutality and the no-protest zone than the WTO.

**What other events took place on the second day of the Conference?**

I know some protesters went downtown to clean up graffiti and broken glass. Was that the day of the labour march?

Yep, day two (December 1) was the day when the first mass arrests took place. The first at around 8:30am when a few hundred people occupied a town square inside the no-protest zone, and the second following a Steelworkers rally by the docks. Can you describe how and why the arrests took place that morning?

People marching were arrested. I think some people were arrested before they even reached the no-protest-zone. Other people were so outraged they spontaneously decided to get arrested. Others were arrested trying to get into the zone.

**In what way did action continue after the arrests?**

More marches, more rallies, jail solidarity actions.

**How were people treated after arrest?**

I'm not the best person to speak about this because I didn't get arrested. But, one of the first things that happened after they arrested hundreds of people was that the arrestees refused to get off the transport buses. I think people on the buses



felt really strong in their solidarity at that point. Since the police were a bit gas-mad by then, they tried to force people off by gassing them on the buses. That sucks, obviously, because the gas is yet more dangerous and painful in an enclosed space.

I heard a lot of stories later about the abuse that went on in the jail. Everything from people being denied phone calls and consultation with a lawyer, to a protester who was strangled for refusing to comply. Apparently, the cops thought suffocating the boy was a new 'pain compliance hold'.

#### **How effective was the jail solidarity?**

That depends on who you are talking to. Some people were released without ever giving their names. The DAN legal team used the non-compliance of the protesters and the presence of a large support rally outside to negotiate for guaranteed access to lawyers. Some people on the inside thought that was really useful and important. I've heard lawyers say that it was not a good use of our limited negotiating position.

#### **What proportion of those arrested took part in jail solidarity?**

My understanding is that most of the people arrested on the second day for minor misdemeanours participated. People who were arrested on suspicion of engaging in property damage were not included in the solidarity. Also, a number of people were arrested on that day but didn't consider themselves 'protesters', mostly black people. Jail solidarity was not extended to them.

#### **So, at what point did the National Guard arrive?**

Officially, the National Guard wasn't used until Wednesday morning.

#### **What did their presence represent and how did this affect the action on the streets?**

The National Guard is a step up from the police. To that point, only policing agencies and federal law enforcement had been involved. To use the National Guard, which is more of a military agency, a State of Emergency had to be declared.

With the help of the National Guard, the police finally established a large security perimeter around downtown (the no-protest-zone). After that, the actions failed to disrupt the WTO meetings, for the most part, and were pretty tame, except at night.

For the next two nights, the police chased people out of the curfew zone and onto Capitol Hill, tear gassing the neighbourhood, enraging everyone there, and increasing the size of the crowd.

#### **What kind of weaponry were the cops using?**

Tear gas, pepper spray, batons, rubber bullets, wooden bullets, rubber bullet cluster bombs and compression bombs. For the most part, they shot 'non-lethal' weaponry out of paintball guns, and I think they can pretty much shoot anything out of those. They were shooting one thing which looked like an anal plug. And, of course, they were armed with real guns and live bullets.

They had one thing, called the 'peacekeeper', which was a big tank, with all the especially mean and scary riot cops hanging off of it. I don't know what special purpose it had other than scaring people. But back to the rubber bullet cluster bomb. Crazy, eh?

#### **Has there been any legal action taken against the police?**

The City of Seattle is investigating. Legal rights groups are suing. The Chief of Police quit, saying that he was meant to resign soon anyway. Everyone in Seattle associated with the policing operation and its failure, as well as the local politicians who dropped the ball, have most certainly had an ass kicking from their higher ups. More than one career dead-ended that day.

#### **Ok, so finally could you tell me what you thought was significant about Seattle for the US movement?**

On November 30, a community of people in this country escalated their tactical resistance together. While neither we nor they (the cops) did anything altogether new, we took a significant step together. It will be interesting to see how things develop. Stay tuned.★





# Black Bloc Communiqué

**What follows is an extract from a communiqué published by one section of the black bloc in Seattle on November 30th.**

On November 30, a loosely organised cluster of affinity groups/individuals in black bloc attacked corporate targets in downtown Seattle. For over five hours, corporate property was strategically and opportunistically destroyed and defaced by a black bloc which remained constantly in motion, avoided engaging with police, buddied up and watched each other's backs (de-arresting those attacked by federal thugs).

Unfortunately, on at least 6 occasions, so-called 'non-violent' activists—AKA peace police—physically attacked individuals targeting corporate property and bodily defended property against the black bloc. These "peace-keepers" posed a greater threat to the black bloc than state-sanctioned "peace-keepers"—highlighting the hypocrisy, privilege and self-policing of the activist community.

## Some Myths Dispelled

*They escalated situations on N30, leading to tear-gassing of passive, non-violent protesters—* Tear-gassing, pepper-spraying and shooting of rubber bullets began before the black bloc engaged in property destruction. We must resist the tendency to establish a causal relationship between police repression and protest in any form: police protect the interests of the wealthy few and blame for their violence cannot be placed upon those who protest those interests.

*They're a bunch of angry adolescent boys—* Girls and post-adolescents fuck shit up too!

*They just want to fight—* On N30, the black bloc was perhaps the least interested in confronting the authorities or other anti-WTO activists.

*They're a chaotic, disorganised, opportunistic mob—* Organisation was fluid, dynamic, and tight. As for opportunism, who didn't take advantage of Seattle to advance their agenda? The question becomes then whether we helped create that opportunity.

*They don't know the issues—* Most of us have studied the effects of the global economy, genetic engineering, resource extraction, transportation, labor practices, elimination of indigenous autonomy, animal rights and human rights for many years. Hence the corporations targeted on N30: Fidelity Investment, Bank of America, Washington Mutual Bank, Old Navy, Banana Republic, the Gap, Niketown, Levi's, McDonalds, Starbucks, Warner Bros.

*Masked anarchists are anti-democratic and secretive because they hide their identities—* Let's face it—we aren't living in a democracy, we're

living in a police state. Those who pose the greatest threat to the interests of capital and state will be persecuted. To accept incarceration as a form of flattery—as worthy sacrifice—betrays crass 'First World' privilege.

Property destruction isn't a violent activity unless it destroys lives or causes pain. Private (especially corporate) property is thus infinitely more violent than any action taken against it.

Personal property is distinguished from private property. The former is based upon use—each having what s/he needs. The premise of private property is that we have something someone else needs. Those who accrue more of what others need (or want) can wield greater control over others (and what others perceive as needs/desires), thereby increasing profit to themselves.

Advocates of 'free trade' want to push this process to its logical conclusion: a few industry monopolists with ultimate control over everyone else. Advocates of 'fair trade' want to mitigate this process via government regulations which superficially impose 'humanitarian standards'. We despise both positions. Private property—and capitalism, by extension—is intrinsically violent and repressive. It cannot be reformed or mitigated.

When we smash a window, we aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property rights. At the same time, we exorcise the set of violent and destructive social relationships which has been imbued in almost everything around us. By 'destroying' private property we convert its limited exchange value into an expanded use value. A storefront window becomes a vent to let some fresh air into the oppressive atmosphere of a retail outlet. A newspaper box is a tool for creating such vents or a small blockade for the reclamation of public space. A dumpster becomes an obstruction to a phalanx of rioting cops and a source of heat and light, a building facade becomes a message board to record brainstorm ideas for a better world.

After N30, people will never see a shop window or a hammer the same way again. The potential uses of an entire cityscape have increased a thousand-fold. Along with the broken windows are the broken spells cast by a corporate hegemony to lull us into forgetfulness of all the violence committed in the name of private property rights and of all the potential of a society without them. Broken windows can be boarded up and replaced but the shattering of assumptions will hopefully persist for some time. ★

**Against Capital and State,**

**The ACME Collective—4th December 1999**



# This Is What Anarchy Looks Like (!?)

## Reflections On Mass Protest In Amerika



**Before Seattle, I had come to feel totally disillusioned with demonstrations, public protests and both the concept and practice of 'mass organising'. For the most part I'd found them to be more disempowering than empowering, and felt that the energy put into them would be much better spent on other forms of action.**

In fact, the most depressing event I've ever been to was the Global Day of (in)Action on June 18th (J18) last year in San Francisco. Not only were there a million riot cops following us everywhere, but after getting a sound system going, the cops immediately declared it an illegal assembly and gave us 5 minutes to disperse. And we did.

My disappointment was compounded by accounts of J18 in London and elsewhere. I wondered what would it take for things to kick off enough here in the belly of the beast to make public protest effective? I was disillusioned with the preliminary reports I had heard about how activists were organising for Seattle—and I almost didn't bother going. Yet Seattle rocked.

One of the best things about it for me was that for the first time in my life, when people shouted, "Whose Streets? Our Streets!" on that fateful Tuesday, it wasn't just a small group of us huddled on the sidewalk getting harassed by tourists and suits for being in the way. This time thousands of people really meant it, and our words were backed

up by our actions. Something had shifted in US politics, and that's the focus of this short treatise.

### Why Seattle Boogied

The Direct Action Network (DAN) jumped on the call for a global day of action against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) early on. They did an excellent job in organising for it, distributing posters and agit-prop all over the country. In particular, the Art & Revolution Convergence group does an excellent job of making protest sexy and appealing, instead of a boring chore one is obliged to take part in on behalf of some authoritarian leftie group. Also, they create events that people who are afraid of police brutality and don't want to get arrested can take part in (the dangers of this approach will be discussed below), which adds valuable numbers to a protest. Thus, difference one—sheer numbers. On November 30th (N30), for the first time since the Gulf War there were fuckloads of people taking over the streets. On top of that, the 10-day Convergence before allowed



people time to plan actions, get to know the city and, importantly, get to know each other.

DAN and other groups also made a great effort to attract a wide spectrum of people to N30, which succeeded in broadening the protest to those outside of our respective little activist ghettos (problems with this will be considered later). Alliances that had previously only been talked about, or were in the beginning stages, were forged on the streets and in meetings during the days before and after N30. Among other advantages, this made it harder to marginalise the voices of dissent against the WTO, and gave people inspiration to go for it because there was the feeling, to greater or lesser degrees, of a common front. And it felt good for a change to go on an action where workers weren't going to be attacking you, physically or verbally, for interfering with their job. Instead, at one point the steelworkers and masked-up riff raff were together in the front line building barricades and chucking tear gas canisters back at the cops.

Despite opinion to the contrary, and despite the obnoxious non-violence guidelines, the organising for N30 allowed people more room to do as they please than in any mass public demonstration I'd ever taken part in. The affinity group and spokescouncil organising structure adopted by DAN had the inevitable effect of helping people see that they could conduct themselves in an effective manner without having to be told what to do. This cannot be emphasised enough—N30 was successful in large part because people thought and acted for themselves and became empowered as a result of it. I was dubious beforehand about whether DAN would succeed in allowing for transparency while planning an illegal action, but in the short term it unquestionably did. And even though many of us had to fight with DAN folks to try and get them to recognise that property damage was going to happen whether they wanted it to or not, and even though some of them denounced the black bloc with a perverse intensity, their model of organisation allowed for the plethora of tactics that left the cops just plain fucked.

A decentralised approach to organising is such a refreshing change, and one that can currently be traced back to groups such as the EZLN (Zapatista Army for National Liberation) and Peoples' Global Action (PGA). It reveals a rejection of political parties and hierarchical leaderships in favour of collectively agreed principles. This was played out brilliantly in the streets of Seattle, and as right-wing papers like *The Economist* have said in the aftermath, will prove to be the major challenge to globalisation unless the corporations do a better job of dividing, conquering, and marginalising radicals while inviting mainstreamers and liberal reformists to the table.

Another thing that should be said is that even though the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Mafia by and large went ballistic against the black bloc, the DAN spokespeople in my opinion did a really great job of 'staying on focus'. Instead of playing into the media's strategy of dividing people along tactical lines and diverting attention away from the real crimes of the WTO (hmmm, let's see, which is worse: broken windows and graffiti or a shredded biosphere and millions in misery?) DAN spokespeople mostly refused to denounce others publicly even if they were pissed off by certain tactics.

## Stumbling Towards Revolution?

How do we draw enough people into our movements to make a significant impact, yet without making alliances that appeal to the lowest common denominator of shared perspective? In other words, how do we build momentum, involving people who don't share our exact focus, without watering down our vision?

The tear gas soaked streets of Seattle dramatised the inherent problems and contradictions in this amorphous movement. A major one appeared when many of the big labour groups that took part in the permitted march came from the perspective of 'Fix or Nix' the WTO, while most of the people blockading the streets were working towards its abolition. On the one hand, I was impressed that people could put aside their differences to a certain degree and focus on the common goal of shutting the fucker down. But now, months after N30, there still hasn't been much awareness or debate about how dangerous it is to work with people and groups who are nationalist, and often racist.

Another issue was the role of the NGOs in 'mediating' the 'debate' between 'civil society' and the corporate/government complex. The foundations that fund NGOs hold a pernicious influence on the directions and policies that these

"These kids didn't come to simply break the windows of The Gap, but to physically perform a metaphor against the system as a whole, including the very idea of protest itself."—From 'Smashing Seattle: How Anarchists Stole the Show at the WTO', in *Anarchy*, Summer/Spring 2000.



groups take, thus earning the distrust of grassroots activists. The situation worsened when these self-appointed leaders of civil society castigated those who damaged property and labelled them as *agent provocateurs* across the board. The head of one of the main NGOs was quoted in *The New York Times* decrying the fact that the police were harassing the peaceful protesters instead of arresting the anarchists.

Perhaps the major and most intractable problem facing the 'anti-globalisation' movement is that people are eager to replace one form of oppression with another. Most of the people who came to Seattle see the solution to out-of-control corporations being strong national governments. These folks refuse to recognise, or just plain haven't considered, the domination inherent in statism. The state and capital are two sides of the same coin, and the loss of sovereignty that people keep carping about is rather pathetic, since individuals rarely have a say in our modern democracies. Furthermore, it's not enough to just oppose free trade, because the opposite of free trade is protected markets, which are still markets that destroy ecosystems and communities.

What the NGOs and Marxist-Leninist/Maoist groups don't understand is that we want freedom from all forms of oppression and domination, including organisations that want to think and represent and act for us. Fortunately, the lefties have been so discredited that we don't have to spend much energy convincing folks that state capitalism is as bad as private capitalism.

## What the Fuck Now?

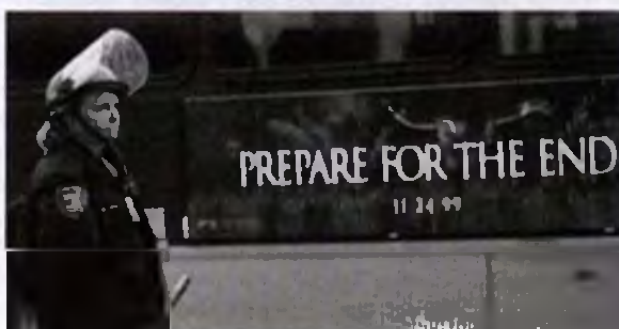
A debate has developed over how radicals (specifically the black bloc) should organise for spectacular events such as J18 and N30. Some feel that anarchists should be autonomous in every way, while others feel that we should infuse our anarchist politics and militancy into the larger movement. While it's compelling and often times easier to work with a small group of mates who share our vision fully, I believe that now is the time to broaden our circles without compromising our values.

As history has shown time and time again, effective radical movements that get marginalised get crushed. Does anyone think we are stronger now than, say, during the earlier part of the twentieth century? Right now, anarchism is very appealing because communism is in shambles, socialism has been bought out, and capitalism is accelerating to its own destructive end. Now is the time to leave the ghetto. I fear our own self-limitation, and the ability of the state to portray us as 'terrorists' to be eliminated, more than I fear our values getting compromised by fossilized lefties, hand-wringing liberals or right-wing bigots.

That's why I believe we should be involved in organizing for mass events. And I think it's just as important at times to build friendships with people who are in NGOs as it is to work with them on projects or actions. If communication was better among different groups, movements, and individuals, we could hold discussions and make decisions without the intense acrimony currently displayed. Moreover, if mainstreamers weren't defensive and worried about getting viciously attacked by us, they would be more open to our arguments, and we would be able to persuade them more easily as to why we have to hold a militant line. Is it our fault that they are defensive, or our responsibility to disabuse them of their flawed views? Certainly not, but if we want to mix property destruction and civil disobedience on the same action, for instance, then we will need to do a better job of conveying why this is important and legitimate. Their limited strategic vision cannot be smashed, but it can be seduced and broadened by us.

The debate over whether property destruction is violence has been raging on these shores—despite it being ridiculous and very boring. My impression is that in other countries such as England, the debate has evolved to, 'when is property damage strategic?' not whether smashing capital's inanimate wealth is violent. For North America to get to that stage, I think the black bloc and other saboteurs need to continue to communicate through writing and debating, while remaining careful to avoid the rigid moral self-righteousness that characterises the Peace Police. If we let the natural appeal of sabotage lead the way, instead of our anger at how stupid some of our supposed allies have been in characterising sabotage as violent, then those tactics will surely find a place in the hearts and hands of the people on the street.

To close—a wave is building on these shores, a post-leftist movement against globalisation, neoliberalism and the state. From the jungles of Chiapas to the grey pavements of Seattle, from indigenous campesinos to urban dwellers, people in the Americas are making a break from the past and organising models of resistance which encourage people to think and act for themselves. *La lucha continual*★





# Countdown to the Battle of Seattle

## An Incomplete Chronology



**For months before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) were due to meet in Seattle, people began to prepare for one of the largest and best co-ordinated efforts to resist capital's expansion for decades. What follows is a brief and incomplete chronology of events leading up to N30.**

### **February 1999, Bay Area, California, USA**

San Francisco Art and Revolution produce and distribute a letter to groups and individuals across North America inviting them to help co-ordinate mass direct action against the World Trade Organisation meeting later that year.

### **June 18th, financial centres across the Globe**

A call for a global day of action put out by several UK-based direct action groups leads to the simultaneous occupation and transformation of financial and banking districts across the globe. Whilst the G8 meet in Cologne, Germany, actions erupt in over 100 cities in more than 40 countries and on every continent on the planet. Networking before and after the event, combined with the exchange of information and inspiration provided by reports of actions which took place on J18 itself, creates massive excitement and lays some of the groundwork which leads to N30 being such a success.

### **Early Summer 1999, somewhere near Seattle, Washington, USA**

A collective inspired by the day of action on J18 and the trend towards a 'globalisation of resistance' puts out a call for a global anti-capitalist day of action on Tuesday, November 30th 1999, to coincide with the first day of the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation to be held in Seattle, Washington, USA.

### **23rd-27th August, Bangalore, India**

The second conference of the PGA (Peoples' Global Action against 'Free' Trade and the WTO) is hosted by the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS). Several hundred meet to discuss ideas, philosophy, tactics and a strategy for building a global anti-capitalist network. The PGA echo the call for November 30th to be billed as a global day of action. A PGA Cross-Continental Caravan is also planned to cross the USA during the build up to N30.

### **Spring/Summer 1999, Northern California, USA**

The Direct Action Network (DAN) is founded and a plan is established to host a 10 day Direct



Action Convergence in Seattle from 19-29th November to be followed by 4 days of action to shut down the WTO.

**28th September-18th October, West Coast of North America**

Art and Revolution take part in a Resist the WTO Roadshow, visiting a number of unions, church groups, direct action collectives, community groups, schools and universities. The group hold discussions and workshops on the WTO, street theatre and non-violent direct action. Propaganda is distributed and people are encouraged to come to the Direct Action Convergence in Seattle from 20th November and to help shut down the WTO.

**September-October, Eugene, Oregon, USA**

The Mabon 1999 Issue of the *Earth First! Journal* is published and distributed across the globe. The four page centre pull-out is entitled 'Shut Down the World Trade Organisation' encouraging people to come to Seattle. The pull-out also contains information on the WTO, global resistance to globalisation, a history of Peoples' Global Action (PGA), the 1919 Seattle General Strike, web resources, ideas for organising against the WTO, a listing of upcoming events and information about the DAN sponsored 'mass non-violent direct action' planned for November 30th. Further copies of the pull-out were produced and distributed around North America in their thousands.

**October 16th-23rd, Washington, USA**

'Globalize This!' Ruckus action camp takes place. Several hundred people from across North America are offered direct action training whilst numerous workshops and discussions take place. A person involved in London Reclaim the Streets holds a workshop on the mobilisation for June 18th in the UK with the hope of inspiring success in Seattle.

**October 29th—November 27th, across the USA**

The Peoples' Global Action (PGA) Cross Continental Caravan, including delegates from the Indian National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM), Israel's Green Action and a number of



Israeli ecological education and animal rights groups, Bolivian environmentalists, London Reclaim the Streets, the German autonomist movement, Panama's Women's Network, industrial and agricultural workers and the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS) visit cities from New York to San Diego to Seattle.

**November 4th—November 27th, across Canada**

Students, unionists and environmentalists spread information about the anti-WTO mobilisation through a Cross-Canada Caravan passing through Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, before arriving in Seattle.

**November 15th, Amsterdam, Netherlands**

A small group occupy a museum ship—one of the earliest symbols of Holland's colonial past—in the harbour of Amsterdam in a symbolic protest against the WTO.

**November 16th, Geneva, Switzerland**

Around thirty people occupy the headquarters of the World Trade Organisation for several hours. The staircase leading to the offices of Michael Moore, Director-General of the WTO are blockaded and enormous banners reading 'No Commerce, No Organisation: Self-Management!' and 'WTO Kills People—Kill the WTO!' are hung from the roof. Occupiers beam live images from the action out into cyberspace from a portable computer.

**November 19th, Athens, Greece**

Shortly before Clinton flies to riot stricken Seattle, he visits Athens where he is greeted by tens of thousands of people protesting about US trade policy and its activity in the Balkans. As stand-offs with the police continue, hundreds retreat to build barricades, smash windows, firebomb dozens of banks and cut a swathe of destruction through a fashionable shopping district.

**November 20th, Seattle, Washington, USA**

The DAN sponsored Direct Action Convergence begins. Thousands from across North America and many from Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia begin to arrive in Seattle. They are offered accommodation in a number of warehouses, squats and private homes, free food from Food not Bombs three times a day, legal





briefings, first aid workshops, non-violence training, the opportunity to form or join affinity groups, video screenings and talks, workshops and discussions on everything from the practical to the philosophical.

#### **November 22-29, throughout Turkey**

Peasants, environmentalists, trade unionists and others take part in a nine-day march across Corlu (North West Turkey). They walk over 2,000 miles to the country's capital, Ankara, arriving on November 30th. On their way, they visit 18 different towns and villages to hold discussions about the attack upon humanity by globalised capital.

#### **November 24th, Manila, Philippines**

Anti-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) demonstrators hold a rally against trade and investment liberalisation and are attacked by police using batons and water cannon.

#### **New Delhi, India**

300 indigenous people from the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh occupy the World Bank, scaling the fence, blockading the entrance to the building and covering it with posters, graffiti and cow shit!

#### **November 25th, Paris, France**

As part of a demonstration against trade liberalisation, 5,000 farmers with goats, ducks and sheep feast on regional products under the Eiffel Tower.

#### **November 26th, New York, USA**

Several hundred people erect a two-storey tripod and hold a massive party to reclaim Times Square on the busiest shopping day of the year.

#### **Seattle, Washington, USA**

Whilst hundreds take to the streets for a carnivalesque celebration of Buy Nothing/Steal Something day a banner is hung over Interstate Highway 5 in protest against the WTO. The banner hangers are arrested.

#### **November 27th, Washington DC, USA**

A group of activists, claiming that the TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) agreement advocated by the WTO would make it impossible for poor nations to afford essential medicines, occupy the offices of US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky demanding 'essential medications for all nations'.

#### **Milan, Italy**

Workers and squatters unite against the WTO on a grassroots trade union demo whilst others lock-on to a McDonalds store hanging banners and distributing leaflets denouncing 'neoliberalism'.

#### **Prague, Czech Republic**

Several actions are held at local supermarkets, including the distribution of free food by Food not Bombs, whilst propaganda about globalisation and the WTO is distributed. Similar activities take place in other Czech cities.



#### **Seoul, South Korea**

Three thousand workers, students and activists rally against the WTO.

#### **Geneva, Switzerland**

Two thousand farmers and three thousand city dwellers march against the WTO.

#### **November 27th-28th, across France**

75,000 people in 80 different cities in France take to the streets to resist the WTO and 'the dictatorship of the

markets'. Meanwhile members of the French Peasants Federation protest with hundreds of others outside McDonalds in Seattle.

#### **November 28th, Seattle, Washington, USA**

The final preparations for the day of action on November 30th are put into place. Tension begins to rise. The headline of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reads, "Whose idea was this anyway?"

#### **November 29th, Milan, Italy**

Students at La Bicocca University occupy the faculty of Biological Sciences to protest against the World Trade Organisation and the imposition of biotechnology.

#### **Seattle, Washington, USA**

A symposium designed for trade ministers and WTO officials to listen to (i.e. co-opt and neutralise) the views of labour, human rights and environmental groups has to be rescheduled after a 'security breach' forces the police to close down and search the conference centre for five and a half hours.

#### **November 29th-December 3rd, New Delhi, India**

Five hundred women and men from the Maheshwar area of the Narmada Valley participate in a three day Dharna (sit-in) at Raj Ghat to protest against the WTO and the construction of the Narmada Dam.

#### **November 30th, Santos, Brazil**

Under the banner of 'Brazil, 500 years of Indian, Black and Popular Resistance!' the Green Alternative Collective and the Libertarian Network of Brixada Sanista perform street theatre whilst clowns distribute leaflets denouncing poverty and capital.

#### **Milan, Italy**

Information is distributed about the WTO, the construction of the Narmada and Itoiz dams and local immigration detention centres. In the evening a public debate is held at the enormous squatted social centre 'Leoncavallo'.



### **Rome, Italy**

The Headquarters of the National Committee for Bio-safety is occupied and banners are dropped in opposition to the WTO and biotechnology.

### **Wales**

Anti-WTO demonstrators take to the streets of Cardiff and Bangor.

### **Quebec, Canada**

An anti-WTO coalition tour the city visiting several banks, the Ministry of Industry and parliament performing street theatre and holding a dance 'for people before profit'.

### **Prague, Czech Republic**

Food Not Bombs distribute free food to the Czech people whilst numerous supermarkets are leafleted.

### **Leeds, England**

50 people distribute leaflets outside corporate offices whilst being surrounded by around 300 police.

### **Halifax, England**

A Nestle factory is occupied by a number of groups connected to the Earth First! network. Several of the occupiers are arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit criminal damage, an offence with a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment. The charges are later dropped.



### **Totnes, England**

Buildings soon to be converted into luxury flats are squatted and opened as a café and information centre to distribute anti-WTO propaganda.

### **London, England**

Students picket the Lewisham branch of City Bank in protest against the privatisation and under-funding of education. The Construction Safety Campaign hold a demonstration outside the Canadian Embassy in response to Canada's attempt to encourage the WTO to make some European countries lift their ban on the use of asbestos. Throughout the day information on links between the privatisation of public transport and the WTO is distributed outside of Euston train station. As night falls, several thousand gather for a rally. Violence erupts between police and demonstrators and a British Transport Police van is overturned and set alight.

### **Manchester, England**

50 people occupy a branch of Lloyds bank and then blockade the road outside.

### **Lille, France**

12 banks, including the Banque Centrale de France, are painted red during the night.

### **Dijon, France**

The entrance to the Dijon Chamber of Commerce is blockaded by a chain of 30 people.

### **Toulouse, France**

An anti-capitalist Father Christmas distributes rotten capitalist fruits to passers-by whilst huge anti-WTO information boards are erected in the city centre.

### **Berlin, Germany**

As slides project the slogan 'Jam the WTO' onto the walls of buildings, a mock demonstration takes place through the town with spoof banners praising neoliberalism and calling for 'More Order, More Security and More Police!'

### **Munich, Germany**

Siemens, a German firm notorious for its use of Jewish slaves in World War II, is targeted by 150 demonstrators for its role in the construction of the Maheshwar dam in the Narmada Valley, India.







#### **Seoul, South Korea**

Three films on the IMF, the WTO and the impact of the neoliberal economy on the people of the world are shown at the Seoul Human Rights Film Festival.

#### **New Delhi, India**

11,000 protest postcards from the people of the Maheshwar area are delivered to the German Embassy by representatives of the NBA (Save Narmada Movement) calling for a halt to the construction of the Maheshwar dam. 100 NBA activists hold a rally outside the embassy. 500 more NBA activists, a women's movement from the slums of Delhi, a radical student organisation, representatives of the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM) and people from several other local organisations hold a rally against the WTO near Raj Ghat, where Mahatma Gandhi's ashes are buried.

#### **Narmada Valley, India**

Over 1000 attend a demonstration against the WTO called by Youths for Narmada.

#### **Bangalore, India**

A demonstration against the WTO is held by the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS) and is attended by thousands of farmers from across the state.

#### **Nashville, USA**

The reception of Al Gore's Presidential Campaign offices is occupied by anti-WTO protesters carrying a 13 ft. Ronald McDonald puppet.

#### **Baltimore, USA**

An anarchist black bloc and Critical Mass cycle ride bring anti-WTO chaos to the streets of Baltimore.

#### **Iceland**

Protests target a US military base and embassy demanding their withdrawal from Iceland.

#### **Luxembourg**

The government department responsible for

taking part in the WTO negotiations is occupied by a group calling themselves 'The Central Council for Dispersed Anti-WTO Opponents.'

#### **Amsterdam, Holland**

100 people arrive at Schiphol Airport and demand free flights to Seattle from the three airlines sponsoring the Ministerial.

#### **Manila, Philippines**

8,000 unionists hold a rally against the WTO outside the US Embassy and Presidential Palace.

#### **Iloilo, Philippines**

A protest against the Mining Act of 1995, which allows 100% foreign equity in local projects, is held.

#### **Bacolod, Philippines**

A rally is held against President Joseph Estrada's plans to amend the constitution to allow for greater foreign investment.

#### **Buenos Aires, Argentina**

A coalition of activist groups occupy the road outside of the Stock Exchange declaring it a 'Beyond the Market' zone.

#### **Pakistan**

More than 8,000 march under the banner 'Shut down the WTO!'

#### **Lisbon, Portugal**

300 leftists, environmentalists and anarchists daub the city's Christmas tree and a McDonalds store with graffiti, blockade the streets and burn an effigy of the WTO in a city square.

#### **Porto, Portugal**

People wearing T-shirts with the slogans 'The World is Not Merchandise' and 'Against Capital: Global Resistance!' distribute leaflets in the town centre and distribute fake money.

#### **Wellington, Aotearoa (New Zealand)**

Anarchists distribute anti-WTO propaganda and free food whilst showing a film and slideshow about the impact of sanctions on the people of Iraq.

#### **Seattle, Washington**

Chaos erupts on the city's streets as tens of thousands blockade the Washington Trade and Convention Centre. Meanwhile, a 150 strong black bloc smash the windows of the WTO's corporate sponsors and daubs the city in anti-WTO and anti-capitalist graffiti. ★



*The writing's on the wall. Seattle, N30.*



# Vampire Alert!

## The Revolution will not be Bolshevised

Soon after the global day of action on June 18th 1999, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) started to take a keen interest in the 'direct action movement' generally and anti-globalisation issues specifically. Obviously pissed off that they'd let 15,000 people smash up the City of London without any of their paper sellers around to tell people about the 'socialist alternative', they targeted the action on November 30th (N30) as the next big thing.

On the day they did their usual thing of saturating the rally with paper sellers and mass-produced placards. Although lots of people tore the *Socialist Worker* bit off the top of these placards, they are still recognisable and make any event look as dull and uniform as possible. Despite being turned down to speak at the event, they got one of their union hacks to speak as 'just' a rail worker.

After the events in Seattle, London and elsewhere on November 30th, the SWP decided that they were definitely on to something here and featured the 'new' anti-capitalism in both their paper and their journal *Socialist Review* as well as organising a series of public meetings around the country called 'People and Protest—Seattle: Where Next?' Not obviously SWP events, these talks mixed their party professionals in with speakers from mainstream liberal groups like Jubilee 2000 and Friends of the Earth, allowing them to pose as the radical alternative. What they hoped to achieve with all this was made blatantly clear in *Socialist Review*, "Mass movements don't get the political representation they deserve unless a minority of activists within the movement seek to create a political leadership, which means a political party that shares their vision of political power from below [sic]. Such a party will be much less than the movement numerically, but much more than the movement ideologically and organisationally".



It's hardly surprising for the SWP to latch on to the next 'issue' to try and take it over and recruit who they can before moving on to the next passing bandwagon, after all, they've been doing it long enough. What's more surprising, and quite worrying, is that they felt they could behave like that with 'us lot'. Seeing a growing anti-capitalist movement, they saw an opportunity to fill the other half of the equation—sure, we're all anti this, that and the other, but what are we *for*? The SWP's answer to this is that we should be for building a centralised, hierarchical party, making it as big as possible and then hopefully taking over the state in the name of the working class. Once we've done that we can centrally plan the economy (i.e. work) and expand production (i.e. industry). This is so far from the free, equal and ecological community that most of us want to see that it's amazing the SWP felt able to act the way they have. The differences aren't just in the way they organise, but in where they want to go—when they talk about anti-



capitalism they mean something fundamentally different to us. It's not just a case of agreeing on the aims but arguing over the best method for getting there—our differences run far deeper than that.

So what can we do about it? Certainly people haven't just left them to it. Thousands of *Vampire Alert!* leaflets pointing out what's wrong with the SWP were handed out at Euston on N30 and at later events. People who had actually been in Seattle talked at their 'People and Protest' meetings, explaining how this and previous global actions had come about partly by people around the world throwing off the dead weight of authoritarian Marxism. Although this has all had an effect on blocking their influence, the most important thing we can do is to be more upfront about what we're for, and not just uncritically work with whoever says they're against the same things as us. Whatever words we choose, 'our' movement has developed over the years into something that is anarchist (refusing hierarchies, the state and party politics), communist (in the best sense of the word—wanting to overcome a world of wages, work and individualism, wanting a world of genuine community) and ecological (questioning industry, technology and 'progress'). Of course, there's a diversity of opinion, but there are themes that we share or it wouldn't make sense to talk of a

"The problem is not that the free trade of the WTO is not fair, because all trade is about the trading in human misery. The problem is capitalism as a whole, the fact that humanity is divided against itself, politically into separate nation states, economically into separate capitalist enterprises (whether private or state run) and individually into separate atomised workers/consumers competing with each other."—From the leaflet 'World Community not Global Economy' distributed at Euston Station, London on N30.

'movement' at all. These themes aren't things we should keep hidden behind vague slogans and only talk about in private. They're at the heart of what we're all about.

Of course it's not just the SWP we should be wary of—there's plenty of other dodgy groups around who superficially have something in common with us. Over the years Militant (now The Socialist Party), The Green Party, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (FoE) have all been involved in anti-roads and other struggles. In many ways they're quite different to the SWP and to each other. What they have in common though is their authoritarian way of organising (leaders and followers, group discipline) and their dodgy aims. Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth want to reform capitalism, helping it overcome its ecological problems and run more smoothly—while, like the SWP, Militant and The Green Party want to take over and run the state. Any brief examination of history shows us what happens when these organisations accrue power; from the activities of Lenin's Bolshevik party, to parts of the Spanish anarchist movement who foolishly formed a part of a coalition government early last century. More recently we can see how the German Green Party have evolved from a loose network of anti-nuclear activists with vague anarchist tendencies to a powerful political party which played a strong role in NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia and Kosova last year. Of course none of this means that individuals involved in these groups are 'the enemy'. Many of the people reading this have probably been members of one of them at some point, and lots of people get involved with them with the best intentions. But hopefully more and more of them will pack it in and do something useful instead. We should never forget that these organisations are not, and never will be, on our side and like all political rackets they'll sooner or later have to be abolished as part of the fight for a free society.★

### Further Reading

To find out more about the history of the Socialist Workers' Party read the pamphlet *Carry on Recruiting* produced by Trotwatch. Available for £2 (including postage) from: Active Distribution, BM Active, London WC1N 3XX, UK. Email: [jon@active.free-online.co.uk](mailto:jon@active.free-online.co.uk)

For a really good round up of why the SWP and other Leninist/Trotskyist groups are crap, read *Class War No.73—An Open Letter to the Revolutionary Movement* available for 50p from: AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH8 9YE, UK.

To receive copies of the recently updated *Vampire Alert!* flyer send an SAE to: Anarchist Teapot, Box B, 21 Little Preston Street, Brighton BN1 2HQ, UK.



# Resources and Further Reading



Although every effort has been made to make this (somewhat lengthy) section as comprehensive as possible, the enormity of what took place in Seattle and around the world on N30 could not hope to be summarised in one publication. Whilst we hope that this section has been useful, there are numerous other web-sites, publications and articles which you may find interesting. Here are a few resources we think are worth having a look at.

## Web Resources

### Direct Action Network/Art and Revolution

[www.agitprop.org/artandrevolution/wto](http://www.agitprop.org/artandrevolution/wto)

At the time of going to print this site had not been updated since early November 1999 so shows a lot of the propaganda and information that was produced to entice people to Seattle. The bulk of the site is dedicated to outlining Art and Revolution/The Direct Action Network's perspective on how they hoped to resist the WTO. Contains briefings for people interested in jail solidarity, forming affinity groups, the spokescouncil and the Direct Action Convergence. Information is also provided on the WTO alongside an events calendar and a catalogue of activist resources and anti-WTO commodities. Since N30, DAN has evolved into a continental network of anti-globalisation groups and individuals. To find out more visit their new web site at: [www.directactionnetwork.org](http://www.directactionnetwork.org)

### Ruckus Society's Anti-WTO Web-Site

[www.globalizethis.org](http://www.globalizethis.org)

This site contains background information on WTO-related issues as well as technical and

practical information for action. WTO info, articles written by anti-globalisation theorists and a recommended reading list appear alongside pages outlining Ruckus' ideas on affinity group organising, climbing tips, media liaison and reconnaissance. Also contains very detailed maps of Seattle and information about permitted demonstrations and rallies in Seattle on N30 with the hope of facilitating action on that day. The Ruckus Society's main post-N30 web site can be viewed at: [www.ruckus.org/](http://www.ruckus.org/)

### Peoples' Global Action (PGA)

[www.pga.org](http://www.pga.org)

The web-site of the international network which endorsed the global day of action on November 30th and helped co-ordinate the Cross-Continental Caravan from New York City to Seattle. An excellent resource for the global co-ordination of action and the exchange of information. Regularly updated and truly inspiring.

### Seattle Independent Media Centre (IMC)

<http://seattle.indymedia.org/>



A very clever site that contains a huge archive of text, stills, video and audio material to document the "five days that shook the WTO". Also features links to discussion groups, tips on dealing with the media, an archive of the daily *Blindspot* newsletters produced by the Seattle IMC throughout the Ministerial, some larger opinion pieces and links to IMCs across the globe.

### **Reclaim the Streets**

[www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

Contains an archive of this group's actions over the last 5 years (including the demonstration held at Euston Station on N30) alongside reproductions of agit-prop and an impressive links page.

### **Publications**

#### **WTO: Seattle Logistics Zine**

"This zine is about the support functions that made the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle possible. The intent was to stress the importance of those functions to any large-scale gathering and to make this information available to anyone that wants to put an event like this together in the future."—from the Introduction.

This is the first draft of a zine which contains reports from different working groups that fulfilled 'support' roles in the build up to N30 and throughout the Ministerial. Includes reports and reflections from: the team who provided security for the Direct Action Network Convergence Centre; volunteer co-ordination teams; the medical team; the communications team; the legal group (those responsible for coordinating jail solidarity and those who ran the legal support office); the scenario group and the tactical team. Second editions are to include reports from the teams responsible for childcare and the provision of food, plus updates from the anti-IMF and World Bank actions which took place in Washington DC in April 2000.

An excellent resource available for \$5 from: Logistics Zine, PO Box 3501, Oakland, CA 94601, USA.

#### **We Are Winning—The Battle of Seattle: A Personal Account**

A personal account and reflection upon the Seattle mobilisation written by "four British eco-anarchists" who were present in Seattle. Includes descriptions about the build up to the day of action, the convergence, N30 itself, jail solidarity, the black bloc and the second, third and fourth days of action that brought chaos to the streets of Seattle. A second edition of this pamphlet has recently been produced.

To receive a copy send a stamped, self addressed envelope (containing well concealed cash if possible) to Riot Tourists c/o Do or Die,

Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY, UK.

#### **World-wide Resistance Roundup inspired by Peoples' Global Action (PGA) Bulletin 5**

A 32 page newsprint document chronicling the accelerating history of the PGA. Gives an excellent history of the movement from which Seattle grew. With information and reflection on the Inter-Continental Caravan that toured Europe in Spring 1999, the second PGA conference in Bangalore, India, the global day of action on June 18th, reports on action from the Narmada and Itoliz dams, Clinton's riotous visit to Athens, West Papuan resistance to Indonesian colonial rule, global reports on N30 plus reports on the uprising in Ecuador, the UNAM students in Mexico, the U'wa land occupation in Colombia, the Biotic Baking Brigade and more... Essential reading in order to understand the history and potential of what erupted on the streets of Seattle.

To receive a copy send a stamped, self addressed envelope to: Reclaim the Streets, PO Box 9656, London, N4 4JY, UK.

#### **WTO Protest Organizers: Don't Throw the Radicals Overboard. A group of activist Intellectuals defend strategic damage to corporate property in Seattle and Eugene.**

Published December 2nd 1999.

Since Seattle the issue of property destruction and the role of black blocs on mass demonstrations has been a contentious issue. Many of those coming from a reformist anti-globalisation perspective (unfortunately, along with some radicals) have been extremely critical of those who ignored the DAN guidelines. Others awkwardly took a 'neither condemn nor condone' position. In response, this short document has

"With rocks in our hands and spray cans in our pockets, we converge on a truly offensive department store. A man comes up to us, looks at the mini black bloc and says, "Hey, cool." We laugh. "Hang on, are you girls? Waaayyy cool!"—The account of a British anarchist quoted in *We Are Winning—The Battle of Seattle: A personal account*.





Marching Band, Seattle, N30

been published and signed by a group of "activist intellectuals" (authors, theorists and academics) in defence of property destruction and the black bloc. They explain briefly the activities of the black bloc, the response of the 'non-violent' protesters, the risks taken by those involved in militant activity and the contributions of anarchists, "black-clad and otherwise," to making the mobilisation the success that it was. Those interested in the issues raised, including the corporate media, are invited to contact the pamphlet's authors who include Daniel Burton-Rose, George Katsiaficas and Ward Churchill, author of *Pacifism as Pathology*.

To receive a copy of this document send a stamped self addressed envelope to: Riot Tourists c/o Do or Die, Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY, UK.

#### **N30 Black Bloc Communiqué: A communiqué from one section of the black bloc of N30 in Seattle**

Published by ACME Collective, December 4th, 1999.

An incredibly coherent and well articulated explanation of how and why some people engaged in property destruction on November 30th. An abridged version of this document can be read above.

#### **Big Rattle in Seattle**

50 minute video "made by two blokes with a video camera".

A pretty funny video made by two British guys in Seattle. Features hilarious footage of some slightly confused North Americans explaining their reasons for wanting to shut down the WTO, some of the spectacular and colourful street occupations and (of course) images of black clad anarchists fucking shit up. Excellent family viewing.

Available for £5.60 (including postage) from: SchNEWS, c/o On-the-Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2DX, UK.

#### **Articles**

##### **Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed Spring-Summer 2000, Vol.18, No.1**

The magazine contains a reprint of a flyer distributed by British anarchists in Seattle, an analysis of two documents written about property destruction in Seattle—one in favour, one against, a reprint of the black bloc communiqué and an article entitled, 'Smashing Seattle: How the Anarchists Stole the Show at the WTO'. This last article is by far the most interesting. It describes the motivations and tactics of the groups mobilising around Seattle and how they were



"upstaged by the anarchist mobilisation". It begins by chronicling the emergence of the American black bloc (after setting the tactic in its original context of European autonomism) and praising it for its militancy.

The article continues to describe the ideas and activities of other 'non-bloc' anarchists such as those involved in the "...talented anarchist marching band...carrying signs, harassing vehicles...", helping Direct Actioneers, distributing leaflets, opening squats and distributing free food. The article concludes, "...it will take more than Walt Disney tactics and Gandhian placebos; more than banners, human chains, or lock-downs; and of course, more than broken windows to halt the terminal trajectory of industrial civilisation. In a communiqué released on December 4 by a section of the black bloc, it aptly concluded, "Broken windows can be boarded up... and eventually replaced, but the shattering of assumptions will hopefully persist for some time to come."

US\$4.95 In USA. US\$6.00 Surface mail outside US. US\$9.00 airmail outside of US. For current and back issues: CAL, POB 1446, Columbia, MO 65205-1446, USA. Make cheques payable in US dollars to CAL Press, or add \$10 for conversion.

### **Organise!—For Revolutionary Anarchism Issue 53**

Featuring two articles on the mobilisation against the WTO. The first is an inspiring and incredibly (over?) optimistic account of the Battle of Seattle, focussing primarily on the ideas and actions of the black clad anarchos. The second, reprinted from the first issue of an American magazine entitled *The Bad Days will End*, concentrates on a critique of the role and motivation of the labour unions. The section concludes with a few comments by the Anarchist Federation (AF).

Send cheques for £1.50 payable to 'Anarchist Federation' at: AF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX, UK.

### **Direct Action Number 14, Spring 2000**

A special issue of this long running magazine which focusses on a different aspect of anarchist ideas and action each issue. This issue examines various forms of "direct action" from GM crop trashings and resistance to the European Monetary Union to the confrontations on the streets of Seattle. Contains a brief report, news on "what next?" and the addresses of a huge number of anti-WTO web-sites.

Send cheques for £1.50 payable to 'Direct Action' at: Direct Action, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW, UK.



*Michael Moore calls time out for the WTO.*

### **Black Flag—For Anarchist Resistance Issue 219**

This re-vamped long running anarchist magazine dedicates a large section (around 9 pages) to Seattle and N30. The first page recounts the demo outside of Euston station from an anarchist perspective (praising the linking together of RTS and rail-workers, slamming the SWP and calling for intelligent responses to

police violence). The second section, following on from the comment, "... hang on, we thought the class war was dead?!" is made up of a number of eye witness reports to what took place on the streets of Seattle and, later, in the jails. This is followed by a discussion on tactics. An account of the activities of the black bloc is followed by a report on the 'Peace Police' and an extract from the pamphlet *Don't Throw the Radicals Overboard* (see above). A global round-up of some of the other events that took place on N30 is followed by a piece entitled, 'After Seattle 99' with a few ideas on practical and theoretical moves forward. The piece closes with a short report on resistance to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in February this year. All in all, a fairly thorough account and analysis of Seattle, the global day of action and the underlying ideas of the mobilisation against the WTO.

Send cheques for £1.50 to: Black Flag, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX, UK.

### **Earth First! Journal**

**Yule Edition, December 1999/January 2000, Vol. 20, No. 2**

This issue of the *Journal* opens with a moving and optimistic editorial reflecting briefly on the gains that were made in Seattle, from bringing the WTO to the forefront of the world's media and building international solidarity to the continuing struggle against domination. The issue also reprints the short text 'Don't Throw the Radicals Overboard' mentioned above, alongside a fairly sizeable article detailing some of the events in Seattle. Also featuring an international round up of what kicked off and where on N30 and a report on the chemical warfare waged by the Seattle Police Department.

To receive a copy send US \$3.50 to: Earth First! Journal, PO Box 1415, OR 97440, USA. ★



# It's All Kicking Off!

## The Radical History of Football



*Traditional Shrove Tuesday football in Alnwick, Northumberland.*

**There are some questions about football that may remain forever obscured by the murky, swirling mists of Years Gone By. Like who exactly decided that Bob Wilson was a natural TV presenter. Or how it ever came to pass that Chris Sutton thought he was too good for the England B team. Or how much exactly Man. United have to pay the referee for every minute of Mystery Stoppage Time. Oh yeah, and there's a few other bits and bobs as well. Like why did football ever happen in the first place, how did it end up like it is today and what has any of it got to do with Doing or Dying for the global resistance movement?**

An appealingly simple answer to the question of why we play and watch football is that it's enjoyable. Desmond 'Naked Ape' Morris suggests that football emerged as a replacement for the fun of pack hunting that was an important part of earlier human life. He writes: "Viewed in this way, a game of football becomes a reciprocal hunt. Each team of players, or 'hunting pack', tries to score a goal by aiming a ball, or 'weapon' at a defended goal-mouth, or 'prey'... The essence of the ancient hunting pattern was that it involved a great deal of physical exercise combined with risk and excitement. It involved a long sequence with a build-up, with strategy and planning, with skill and daring and ultimately with a grand climax and a moment of triumph. This description fits well the activities of a sportsman such as a footballer, but is a far cry from the life-style of a worker at a factory-bench or a clerk in an office."<sup>1</sup>

Others have stuck their necks out with the theory that the first ball was a dead opponent's head on the battlefield, and there is a holy implausible suggestion in the 12-volume *Book of Football*, published in 1905, that the game began when Cain and Abel kicked an apple around the Garden of Eden in 5000 BC.<sup>2</sup> But one notion that certainly cannot be ruled offside is that football developed out of pagan religious rites. This evidence is not confined to Britain (which provides the focus for most of this article, simply because of availability of information), but has the kind of universal nature that suggests origins very early on in human history.

For instance, in China in 500 BC, people were playing a football game called "tsu chu".<sup>3</sup> Six hundred years later, the Chinese writer Li Yu (50-130 AD) penned this eulogy to the local game, designed to be hung on the goal posts:



"A round ball and a square goal  
Suggest the shape of the Yin and the Yang.  
The ball is like the full moon  
And the two teams stand opposed."<sup>4</sup>

Elsewhere, the ancient Greeks had episkyros and the Romans harpastum; both ball games played with two teams.<sup>5</sup>

## A Game of Two Halves

The first footie in Britain was played by huge numbers of people on vast 'pitches' with very few rules. Villages were divided into two sides, often based on where they lived. The games were usually linked to special dates in the calendar and some of these traditions have survived today. For instance, on January 1 in Kirkwall, Orkney, street football breaks out at 10.00am each year. There is a Hocktide (first Sunday after Easter) game at Workington, Cumbria, and July sees 'Reivers Week' at Duns, Borders, where the 'ba' game is between the married and single men of the town. But the biggest day of the year for folk football in Britain is Shrove Tuesday. Some 50 such local traditions are recorded, although only six survive today.<sup>6</sup>

One of these is at Sedgefield, County Durham, where at 1.00pm, a ball is passed through a small ring, known as the Bull Ring, on the village green. It is then thrown to a baying pack of anything up to 1,000 players. The 500-yard pitch stretches between the two goals—an old duck pond and a stream—and the big match comes complete with its own traditional chant:

"When the pancakes are sated,  
Come to the ring and you'll be mated,  
There this ball will be upcast,  
May this game be better than the last."

Another famous game is at Ashbourne, Derbyshire. The Up'ards, born one side of river Henmore, take on the Down'ards, born on the other. The goals are three miles apart, with several streams in between, making it rather tricky to score quickly on the break.

There are further contests at Atherstone in Warwickshire, Alnwick in Northumberland, Corfe Castle in Dorset and St. Columb in Cornwall. Although strictly speaking the latter is more a hurling game than a football match proper, it is worth a mention for having the most blatantly pagan matchday ritual. A silver ball is dipped into jugs of beer to make 'silver beer' in what sounds very much like a lunar ceremony... (We was over the moon, Brian.)

So why specifically Shrove Tuesday for football? Now only an excuse for pancake-gorging, this was originally an important pre-Christian spring festival, tied into the vernal equinox (Easter) and the last day of Carnival (Mardi Gras). The football element certainly fits into the general anarchy of the occasion—in the West Country, the night before

was known as Nickanan Night, when mischief and vandalism abounded. Rather more of a long shot is that the shape of the ball could be tied into the theme of eggs and fertility that underlies these springtime rites.

Janet and Colin Bord argue that folk football is linked into weird hippy stuff like leylines and energy production: "We have already suggested that the many customs involving dancing (for example, Morris dancing, May Day dancing, dancing around bonfires) and skipping may have been intended to raise energy and this idea can be extended to the rowdy and boisterous games which are also such a feature of Britain's traditions." They quote Mircea Eliade, in *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, as stating: "The contest and fights which take place in so many places in the spring or at harvest time undoubtedly spring from the primitive notion that blows, contests, rough games between the sexes and so on, all stir up and increase the energies of the whole universe." And the Bords add: "The customs may become clearer if we instead describe them as magical rites performed to raise energy, which is then directed to the desired goal, which is usually the fructification of crops, cattle, people and the well-being of the land itself. When these magical rites are performed at prehistoric sites which themselves may already produce or store energy, then the rites are adding to the energies present at the site and available for use." They argue that there are strong links between these ancient special sites—the 'sacred turf'—and leys or energy networks: "Jeremy Harte has already noted that the Alnwick Shrove Tuesday football game takes place along the main street, the A1068, which aligns with a church, an abbey and Eglingham church, while part of the A351 road in Corfe Castle, Dorset, again where Shrovetide football is played, aligns with the castle and a tumulus."<sup>7</sup>

It could be added that at another of our surviving Shrove Tuesday fixtures, at Atherstone, the main road also forms an important part of the pitch.<sup>8</sup> Readers may like to revive the tradition



Traditional football in Barnet



along their local leyline/dual carriageway, not forgetting to bring some tripods. Ancient sites or not, the same energising effect was evident in the version of football that continued the tradition in towns and cities in the Middle Ages. Between 1170 and 1183, William Fitz Stephen, biographer of Thomas a Becket, wrote of London: "After dinner all the youth of the City goes out into the fields for the very popular game of ball." He said the elders came to watch and "there seems to be aroused in these elders a stirring of natural heat by viewing so much activity and by participation in the joys of unrestrained youth."<sup>9</sup>

But energy was not necessarily a good thing in a society where passivity, conformity and obedience to authority were increasingly required as

urbanisation took a hold. Writes football historian James Walwin: "Quite apart from the injuries to players, medieval observers were more alarmed by the wider social unrest caused by football. The game was simply an ill-defined contest between indeterminate crowds of youths, often played in riotous fashion, in tightly restricted city streets, producing uproar and damage to property... It was, in brief, a game which at times came perilously close to testing to the limits the social control of local and national governments."<sup>10</sup>

## Bringing the Game into Disrepute

Urban disorder, defiance of the law, panicking authorities—it all sounds like the stuff of potential revolution. But was there any real undercurrent of

## 600 Glorious Years of Beastlie Furie and Extreme Violence

From medieval times right through to the Nineteenth century, football battled against various attempts to suppress it. Highlights include:

**1287:** Synod of Exeter bans "unseemly sports" from churchyards.<sup>11</sup> **1314:** Edward II's ministers issue a proclamation stating that "forasmuch as there is a great noise in the city caused by hustling over large balls, from which many evils may arise, which God forbid, we command and forbid, on behalf of the King, on pain of imprisonment, such game to be used in the city in future."<sup>12</sup> **1349:** Edward III repeats the prohibition, describing football as one of many "foolish games which are of no use". Further decrees against football follow in 1389 and 1401.<sup>13</sup> **1531:** Sir Thomas Elyot writes in his treatise *The Boke Named The Governour* that football is "nothing but beastlie furie and extreme violence".<sup>14</sup> **1555:** Football is banned at Oxford University.<sup>15</sup> **1572:** Elizabeth I passes a decree that "No football play to be used or suffered within the City of London".<sup>16</sup> **1576:** A group of artisans in Ruislip "with unknown malefactors to the number of a hundred, assembled themselves unlawfully and played a certain unlawful game, called football, by reason of which unlawful game there arose amongst them great affray, likely to result in homicides and serious accidents."<sup>17</sup> **1608-9:** Reports in Manchester of "a compaignie of lewde and disordered persons using that unlawful exercise of playinge with the footbale in ye streets of the a said towne breakinge many men's windows and glasse..."<sup>18</sup> **1615:** Football is said to be causing "greate disorders and tumults" in the City of London.<sup>19</sup> **1600s:** "In many respects Puritanism in that period became a greater enemy of sport, especially of

the popular, bloody variety, than medieval monasticism had been, and the history of sport in Puritan England could be written largely in terms of the regular enactments against it."<sup>20</sup> The Puritan pamphleteer Philip Stubbes writes that football is more "a bloody murdering practice than a fellowly sport or pastime".<sup>21</sup> **1660:** It is alleged of an undergraduate at Cambridge University that "he was in a compaignie that did in a Riotous manner throw clotts or stones at the deputy proctor and Masters of Arts who came to prevent scholars from playing at football, and other disorderly meetings there."<sup>22</sup> **1796:** After the death of a man in Derby's Shrove Tuesday game, football is condemned as "disgraceful to humanity and civilisation, subversive of good order and Government and destructive of the Morals, Properties and very lives of our Inhabitants."<sup>23</sup> **1830s:** "The days had gone when authorities stood by helplessly while their subjects took the law into their own hands with impunity; in the capital for instance bands of footballers ceased to be able to create mayhem at will. Street football in the old cities was one of the victims of effective law enforcement."<sup>24</sup> **1838:** "Football seems to have almost gone out of use with the inclosure of wastes and commons, requiring a wide space for its exercise."<sup>25</sup> **1881:** Eward Home Coleman reports: "The ancient custom of playing at football in the public streets was observed at Nuneaton on the afternoon of March 1st. During the morning a number of labourers canvassed the town for subscriptions and between one and two o'clock the ball was started, hundreds of roughs assembling and kicking it through the streets. The police attempted to stop the game, but were somewhat roughly handled."<sup>26</sup>



radicalism in the footballing tradition? Certainly, not all radicals have thought so over the years. For instance, striking trade unionists in Derby in 1833-34 saw the local game as "barbarous recklessness and supreme folly", promoted by the local elite in a display of de-radicalising paternalism.<sup>27</sup> But on the other hand, as James Walwin points out: "Football, with its wild teams and its violence, like many other apparently non-political and innocent phenomena, could easily become the spark for a wider disturbance."<sup>28</sup> The historian adds: "The game appealed primarily to young, healthy men whose vigour and collective boisterousness could not easily be contained by a society which lacked effective police forces or similar agents of social control. In London, for example, the apprentices—traditionally radical groupings, always willing to test the resilience of national and local governments—were often the chief cause of footballing incidents." These apprentices "posed a constant threat of unruliness and often of radical agitation", says Walwin.

Indeed, on several occasions in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries football is known to have been part of definitely political happenings. In 1638 in Lilleport and Ely, a football match was organised deliberately to attract a crowd and pull down the banks designed to drain local fens. In 1647, in opposition to miserable Puritanism and the increasing centralisation of authority, a Canterbury crowd closed down all the shops that had obeyed the order to open for Christmas. They then proceeded to serve free drinks for all, pelt the Presbyterian minister with shit and open the city gaol. When the mayor was vanquished and his officers seen off, the crowd produced footballs and some billeted republican soldiers deserted and joined in the fun.

In 1740 "A Match of Futtball was cried at Kettering of five Hundred Men of a side, but the design was to Pull Down Lady Betey Jesmaine's Mills." In 1764 at West Haddon, Northants, 2,000 acres of land was enclosed. Locals made the usual formal objections, but these were ignored. So they decided to play football on the enclosed land. "Within moments of kick-off, the football match degenerated into an overtly political mob which tore up and burned the enclosure fences. Dragoons, specially drafted from Northampton, could do nothing in the face of such resistance and the damage amounted to some £1,500."<sup>29</sup>

In 1768 an enclosure at Holland Fen, Lincolnshire, triggered off no fewer than three political 'football' matches in just one month. "July 1st, the insurgents, consisting of about two hundred men, threw up a football in the fen and played for about two hours, when a troop of dragoons, some gentlemen from Boston and four constables, having seized four or five of the rioters,



*A traditional football game played in Kingston marketplace.*

committed them to Spalding gaol. Dr Shaw, of Wyberton, set three women rioters at liberty and the men were admitted to bail. On the 15th another ball was thrown up and no person opposed them... On the 29th another ball was thrown up without opposition."<sup>30</sup>

## The Reverle's a Bastard

The most interesting thing about these examples is the way that a traditional game was being used to reclaim traditional rights. And it is at this interface between custom and protest that the true political relevance of football can probably be found. Although the various efforts to suppress football have had superficially practical reasons—such as re-directing the populace to the militarily useful sport of archery or stopping windows being smashed—there were deeper forces at work here. One of these was the ruling elite's constant fear of the energy and potential power of the mass of ordinary people, no matter whether it was harnessed to 'political' ends or not. An English gentleman is quoted as having complained in 1892: "The lower middle and the working classes may be divided into two sets; Fabians and Footballers, and 'pon my word, it's difficult to say which is the greater nuisance to the other members of society."<sup>31</sup> Walwin comments: "Throughout these centuries, football was the game of the common people; the game reflects the lives of those who played it. Similarly the hostile reactions of the upper classes reflect their attitudes towards the commoners."<sup>32</sup> In this context, it is not surprising that football was not the only popular tradition to meet with hostility from the ruling classes. By the Nineteenth century nearly every other custom from wood-gathering and gleaning to bonfires and Maypoles was under threat. Folklore researcher Bob Bushaway writes: "Suppression of the vulgar and offensive elements of custom was seen as improving and as necessary if the sanctity of power and property





*Shrove Tuesday football in the river at Ashbourne in 1921.*

was to be safeguarded. The purging and remodelling of popular customs during the Victorian period was the central feature of this image.<sup>33</sup> He adds that "denial of access to customary locations and venues" was a key part of this suppression, in particular through enclosure. At the heart of the conflict was the difference between custom and law and the efforts of authority to replace the first with the second. This was hardly a new phenomenon even then—radical bishop and reformer John of Antioch was declaring back in the fourth century that "The enslaved are the fittest to be governed by laws and free men by custom."<sup>34</sup>

Oliver Goldsmith also defended custom over law in the Eighteenth century, as did John Stuart Mill in 1848. Wrote the latter: "The farther we look back into history, the more we see all transactions and engagements under the influence of fixed customs. The reason is evident. Custom is the most powerful protector of the weak against the strong; their sole protector where there are no laws of governments adequate to the purpose."<sup>35</sup> Bushaway notes: "A language of custom was understood by the community, which indicated action which was tolerated, censured action which was not and acted as a vehicle for enforcing the collective will." And these customs simply could not be accepted by the law, resulting in "the redefinition of custom as crime."<sup>36</sup>

E.P. Thompson produced some fascinating evidence of the way in which custom is tied in with popular working class culture.<sup>37</sup> And radical historian Christopher Hill asks, while considering the changes brought in with land enclosure from 1641 to the early 1900s: "Why should the lower classes respect laws which asserted property rights AGAINST traditional popular customs from the villages?"<sup>38</sup> And he links the defence of popular tradition and custom with "an ideology of freedom... which looks back to Robin Hood and his outlaws." The concept of a custom-led, self-

governing traditional society is also central to some versions of anarchist theory, particularly that of German-Jewish anarcho-socialist Gustav Landauer (1870-1919). He used the word 'Geist' to describe a kind of community spirit that was the cement within a custom-based society, one built from the bottom upwards. Argued Landauer: "The state, with its police and all its law and its contrivances for property rights, exists for the people as a miserable replacement for Geist and for organisations with specific purposes; and now the people are supposed to exist for the sake of the state, which pretends to be some sort of ideal structure and a purpose in itself, to be Geist... There exists a community alongside the state, not just a sum of isolated individual atoms, but an organic solidarity, consisting of highly differentiated groups... We still know nothing or very little about this supra-individual structure that is pregnant with Geist, but one day it will be known that socialism is not the invention of something new, but the discovery of something that has been present and has grown in society."<sup>39</sup>

Landauer saw this Geist as representing freedom. Since we do not have freedom in current society, that makes Geist, or community spirit, an automatically revolutionary force. This was surely a conclusion shared by those who went to such lengths to kill off football and the other customs threatening their system from below.

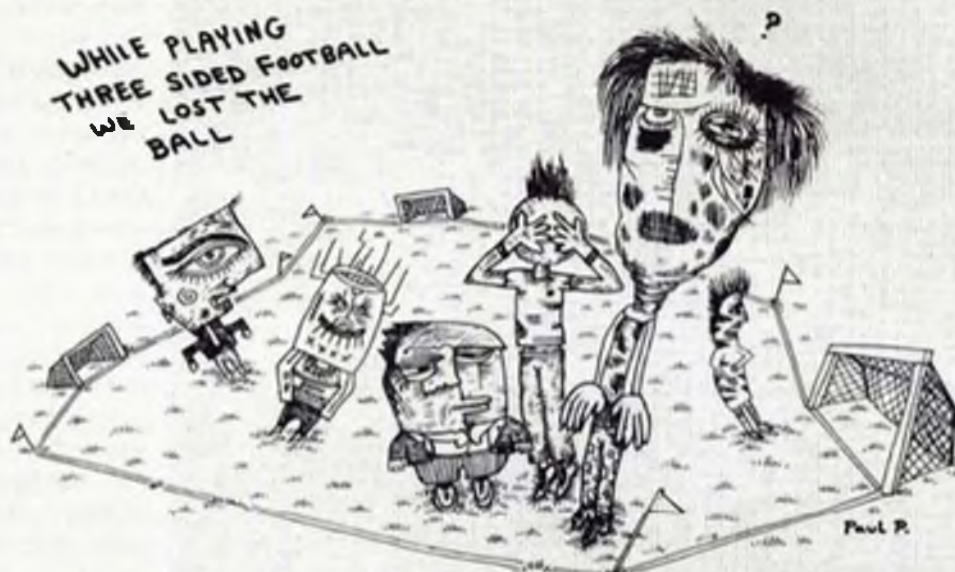
## **We was Robbed**

Of course, outright suppression was not the only method used to wipe out allegiance to a folk-law that was holding up the onward march of Progress. Writes Bushaway: "In late Hanoverian and Victorian England, the propertied class attempted to annex popular custom and the customary rights of the poor, partly by suppression and partly by acquisition and transformation."<sup>40</sup> In the same way that bawdy and pagan Morris Men were transformed into stockbrokers waving white hankies around on a Sunday afternoon and nursery rhymes had all the words changed for polite Victorian society, so was football re-invented for the modern era. You could argue that its absorption into the status quo started as far back as 1615 when James I attended a football match in Wiltshire or 1681 when Charles II attended a fixture between members of Royal Household and Duke of Albermarle's servants.<sup>41</sup>

But today's association football was truly born of the 'muscular Christianity' of Victorian Britain, where city missions and big public schools "saw football as a healthy means of channelling aggression and teaching the important lessons of team spirit and competition."<sup>42</sup> Of course, oral custom had to be replaced by written laws and in 1848 the Cambridge Rules were drawn up at



# An Introduction To Three-Sided Football



It appears that the first person to come up with the idea of 3-sided football was Asger Jorn, who saw it as a means of conveying his notion of trialectics—a trinitarian supercession of the binary structure of dialectics. We are still trying to discover if there were any actual games organised by him. Before the London Psychogeographic Association organised its first game at the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School in 1993, there is little evidence of any games being played.

There is, of course, the rumour that Luther Blissett organised an informal league of youth clubs which played 3-sided football during his stint at Watford in the early Eighties. Unfortunately, our research has found no evidence to support this. Nevertheless, Blissett's name will probably remain firmly linked to the 3-sided version of the game, even if in an apocryphal fashion.

The key to the game is that it does not foster aggression or competitiveness. Unlike two-sided football, no team keeps a record of the number of goals they score. However they do keep a tally of the goals they concede, and the winner is determined as the team which concedes least goals. The game deconstructs the mythic bi-polar structure of conventional football, where an us-and-them struggle mediated by the referee mimics the way the media and the state pose themselves as 'neutral' elements in the class struggle. Likewise, it is no psycho-sexual drama of the fuckers and fucked—the possibilities are greatly expanded!

The pitch is hexagonal; each team being assigned two opposite sides for bureaucratic purposes should the ball be kicked out of the play. The blank side is called the frontside. The side containing the orifice is called the backside, and the orifice is called a goal. Should the ball be thrust through a team's orifice, the team is

deemed to have conceded a goal—so in an emblematic fashion this perpetuates the anal-retentive homophobic techniques of conventional football whereby homo-erotic tension is built up, only to be sublimated and repressed.

However the trialectic appropriation of this technique dissolves the homo-erotic/homo-phobic bipolarity as a successful attack will generally imply co-operation with the third team. This should overcome the prominent resistance to women taking their full part in football.

Meanwhile the penetration of the defence by two opposing teams imposes upon the defence the task of counterbalancing their disadvantage through sowing the seeds of discord in an alliance which can only be temporary. This will be achieved through exhortation, body language, and an ability to manoeuvre the ball and players into such a position that one opposing team will realise that its interests are better served by breaking off the attack and allying themselves with the defending team.

Bearing in mind that such a decision will not necessarily be immediate, a team may well find itself split between two alliances. Such a situation opens them up to the possibility of their enemies uniting, making maximum use of this confusion. 3-sided football is a game of skill, persuasion and psychogeography. The semicircle around the goal functions as a penalty area and it may be necessary to use it for some sort of offside rule which has yet to be developed.

**by the Association of Autonomous Astronauts  
(East London Branch), Box 15, 138 Kingsland  
High Street, London E8 2NS, UK.  
Email: [aaa@unpopular.demon.co.uk](mailto:aaa@unpopular.demon.co.uk)**





*Fan Power: April 1996, Brighton and Hove Albion fans occupy the Goldstone ground. When dodgy director Bill Archer sold off the Seagulls' old historic ground for a song his schemes left the club homeless and fans took things into their own hands, starting a protest movement to kick out Archer and save their club. Saturday April 27 was due to be the last match ever played at the Goldstone. But just 15 minutes into the game against York thousands of fans invaded the pitch, the York and Brighton fans swapping shirts and uniting in chants of 'Sack the Board'.*

Cambridge University by old boys from Eton, Harrow, Shrewsbury and Winchester. In 1862 a set of ten rules was drafted by J.C. Thring of Uppingham College, and in 1888 a professional Football League was set up.<sup>43</sup> From then on, it was all downhill. The plebs were turned from participants into passive spectators and the final whistle was blown on the threat posed to the establishment by football. Right? Well, not quite. Football was one popular custom whose spirit refused to lie down straight away and the participation did not so much die out as transfer to the terraces. It is something of a myth that football crowds were all well-behaved gatherings of dapper middle-aged men in hats until the 1960s. For instance, the term 'hooligan' was invented in 1898. And researchers at Leicester University say more than 4,000 incidents of hooliganism occurred at football matches between 1894 and 1914, particularly from 1894 to 1900 and 1908 to 1914. They suggest a link between outbreaks of football violence and the presence in the crowd of members of youth gangs, the so-called 'scuttlers' or 'peaky blinders'.<sup>44</sup> But it was not just the odd pitch invasion or outbreak of fistcuffs that made the act of watching football a natural continuation of playing folk football. The upper classes knew

this too. This was why, right from the start, they condemned the uncivilised cult of 'spectatorism'. Writes sports historian Richard Holt: "It was perfectly acceptable for keen players to watch others playing for the love of it, but it was quite another for thousands of working-class youths and men to shout and swear, roaring their team on to victory by fair means or foul. Far from being 'rational', this was no more than mindless fanaticism, obstinate and arbitrary partisanship devoid of sense, morality or self-restraint. Little different in fact from the mobs that had baited bulls or carried the bladder of a pig from one end of the town to another. Was it for this that the old

games had been revised and refined in the best schools in the land?"<sup>45</sup>

However, despite this continuity of spirit, changes in the world outside meant that the political implications of football's fanaticism changed during the course of the Twentieth Century. Passionate loyalty to locality remained, but the locality was the nearest city with which urban or suburban supporters identified, rather than the community in which they lived. Says Holt: "These inhabitants of big cities needed a cultural expression of their urbanism which went beyond the immediate ties of kin and locality. A need for rootedness as well as excitement is what seems most evident in the behaviour of football crowds."<sup>46</sup> And what better extension of this industrialised ersatz-identity than chauvinistic patriotism, encouraged by the growth of flag-waving international matches? The obstinacy and bloody-mindedness that was once directed to defending local traditions and local autonomies was now diverted into an emotional attachment with large authoritarian organisations—the clubs—and with national states. Not much radical potential in that, and it is not surprising in these circumstances that the terraces provided useful recruiting grounds in the 1970s for the likes of the National Front. There



was more to this than just the dynamics of football crowds—the alienation of a stagnating left from much of the working class was also a contributing factor.

Perhaps it was the over-representation of liberal, politically correct and middle class values on what passed for the political 'left' (today's New Labour faithful?) that led them to join the centuries-old condemnation of football as thuggish, boorish, worthless etc. etc. For behind all the moral outrage about violence, pitch invasions and obscene chanting, it was clear that their real objection to football crowds was that they were predominantly working-class and didn't obey the laws as laid down by their betters. Writes Holt: "Middle-class ideals of 'playing the game' have always been alien to rough working-class culture. Deracinated urban youths have built upon this uncompromisingly physical attitude to games and turned it into a different, more aggressive and organized subculture."

Recounting an anecdote about fans placing shit in a rival supporter's shoes, Holt links this aspect into the ancient tradition of misrule in football. "Antics of this kind had been the stuff of carnival throughout Western Europe for centuries. In Nineteenth century Paris young revellers would melt down chocolate and smear horrified passers-by with what they took to be excrement."<sup>47</sup> In the 1980s, particularly after the tragedy at Heysel in 1985,<sup>48</sup> it looked as if Mrs. Thatcher was going to simply ban this horrible working class activity and get the Americans to bomb Wembley. But instead, capitalist common sense prevailed and the industrialised version of football was absorbed into late Twentieth century consumerism. The Hillsborough disaster of 1989,<sup>49</sup> which should have been a searing indictment of the way fans were treated by police and clubs, was instead used as an excuse to try and kill off fan culture with compulsory all-seater stadiums in the top division. At the same time football found a whole lot more shit falling out of the Sky as money-grabbing City fans queued up at the metaphorical turnstiles to cash in on the ultimate brand loyalty of supporting a football team. British Sky Broadcasting now owns stakes in Man, United, Chelsea, Leeds, Man. City and Sunderland. Granada owns a stake in Liverpool and New York cable company NTL owns shares in Aston Villa and Newcastle.<sup>50</sup>

### **They think it's all over...**

The game lives on, obviously, and is even more popular than ever. But every season the fans are becoming more like consumers of any other contemporary leisure product. You can't always afford to go any more. You can't stand up. You can't sit with the crowd you want to, because your pre-booked plastic seat is numbered. It's not as

## **Football to the Footballers!**

**In the insurgent Paris of May 1968 when millions of workers were on strike, the students had occupied the universities, the president had fled the country and France seemed on the verge of revolution, the footballers were not to be left out. Footballers occupied the headquarters of the French Football Federation and issued a communiqué:**

*"We footballers belonging to the various clubs in the Paris region have today decided to occupy the headquarters of the French Football Federation. Just like the workers are occupying their factories, and the students occupying their faculties. Why?"*

**IN ORDER TO GIVE BACK TO THE 600,000 FRENCH FOOTBALLERS AND TO THEIR THOUSANDS OF FRIENDS WHAT BELONGS TO THEM: FOOTBALL. WHICH THE PONTIFFS OF THE FEDERATION HAVE EXPROPRIATED FROM THEM IN ORDER TO SERVE THEIR EGOTISTICAL INTERESTS AS SPORTS PROFITEERS...**

...Now it's up to you: footballers, trainers, managers of small clubs, countless friends and fans of football, students and workers—to preserve the quality of your sport by joining us to...

**...DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL** (by means of a referendum of the 600,000 footballers, controlled by themselves) of the profiteers of football and the insulters of the footballers.

**FREE FOOTBALL FROM THE TUTELAGE OF THE MONEY OF THE PATHETIC PRETEND-PATRONS** who are at the root of the decay of football. And demand from the state the **SUBSIDIES** that it accords to all other sports, and which the pontiffs of the Federation have never claimed.

So that football may remain yours, we call on you to **MAKE YOUR WAY WITHOUT DELAY** to the headquarters of the Federation which has again become **YOUR HOUSE**, at 60 Avenue d'Iena, Paris.

United, we will make football once again what it ought never to have ceased to be—the sport of joy, the sport of the world of tomorrow which all the workers have started building. **EVERYONE TO 60 AVENUE D' IENAI"**

*—Footballer's Action Committee*

**From: Enragés and Situationists in the Occupations Movement, May '68 by René Viénet (Autonomedia/Rebel Press, 1992)**



bad outside the Premiership, but then smaller clubs left out of the cash bonanza could well be going to the wall in large numbers in years to come. So is this the end of the football spirit in this country? What can be done to save the game from the grasps of global capitalism? There have been plenty of attempts at fomenting real rebellion in the football grounds. Fan power, harnessed to the independent fanzine movement, has kept the flag of dissent flying and the influence of the far right has been successfully challenged by anti-fascist groups. But it seems to be a losing battle. Even the anarchist mag *Animal* wasn't very optimistic in its football special in 1998, sighing: "Is the best supporters can hope for to join together in the independent supporters associations, build their arguments and then hit the money men when the opportunities present themselves?"<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the answer is to forget the capitalist citadels of modern professional football and go back to football's roots for inspiration. Seven-a-side footie tournaments are already a regular feature of radical gatherings like May Day 2000, the Easton Cowboys from Bristol forged international revolutionary links by travelling to Chiapas to play football with the Zapatistas and Reclaim the Streets-style mass street football matches have also taken place. Alongside this we would also do well to look at the way that football, and customs as a whole, can motivate and empower communities.

## There's only Wahn Gustav Landauer

Whatever you think of leylines, the idea put forward by the Bords that football creates energy has a lot going for it. Energy. This is surely what we need in order to foment and encourage a real rebellion against the forces of industrial darkness, not more arid analyses and half-cocked compromises. We need to find the catalyst to release the ancient, raw energy of the people, the kind of spine-tingling collective power that can still, despite everything, be experienced at football matches. This was what Landauer was talking about with the dynamic extension of his Geist, or community spirit, into what he termed Wahn. He wrote: "Wahn is not only every goal, every ideal, every belief in a sense and purpose of life and the world: Wahn is every banner followed by mankind, every drumbeat leading mankind into danger; every alliance that unites mankind and creates from a sum of individuals a new structure, an organism. Wahn is the greatest thing mankind has; there is always something of love in it: love is Geist and Geist is love: and love and Geist are Wahn."<sup>52</sup>

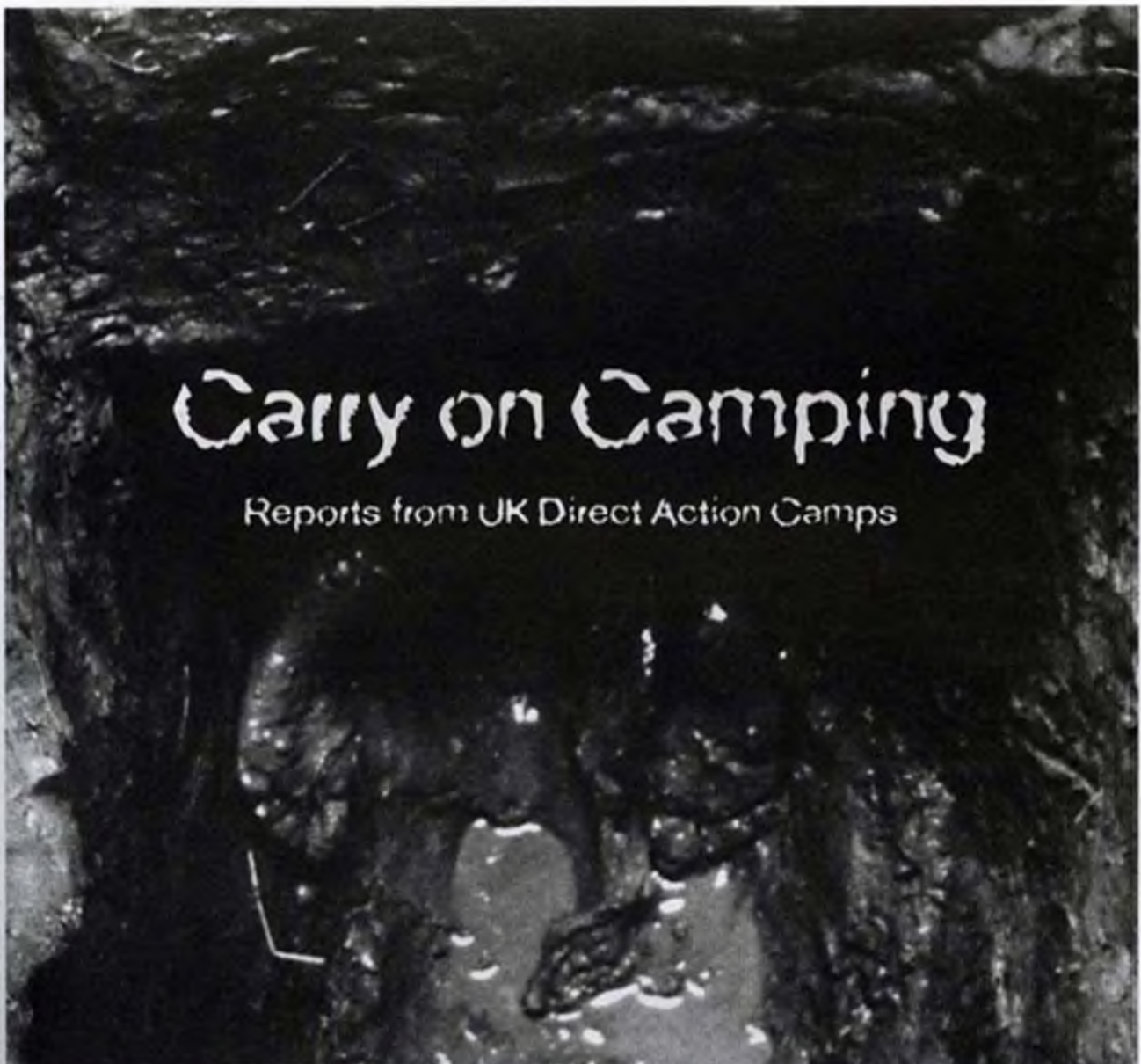
And when we have energised our Wahn and defeated Property, Progress and Profit United, we will perhaps once again have enough space and time for a nice relaxing game of footie.★

## Notes

- 1) Desmond Morris—*Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behaviour* (Triad/Grenada, London, 1978)
- 2) Jonathan Rice—*Curiosities of Football* (Pavilion, London, 1996)
- 3) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 4) James Walvin—*The People's Game: The Social History of British Football* (Allen Lane, London, 1975)
- 5) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 6) Quentin Cooper and Paul Sullivan—*Maypoles, Martyrs and Mayhem: 366 Days of British Customs, Myths and Eccentricities* (Bloomsbury, London, 1994)
- 7) Janet and Colin Bord—*Earth Rites: Fertility Practices in Pre-Industrial Britain* (Granada, London, 1982)
- 8) *Op. Cit.* 6.
- 9) *Op. Cit.* 4.
- 10) *Ibid.*
- 11) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 12) *Ibid.*
- 13) *Ibid.*
- 14) *Ibid.*
- 15) *Op. Cit.* 4.
- 16) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 17) *Op. Cit.* 4.
- 18) *Ibid.*
- 19) *Ibid.*
- 20) *Ibid.*
- 21) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 22) *Op. Cit.* 4.
- 23) *Ibid.*
- 24) *Ibid.*
- 25) (Quoted in) *Ibid.*
- 26) Bob Bushaway—*By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (Junction, London, 1982)
- 27) Dave Russell—*Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995* (Carnegie, Preston, 1997)
- 28) *Op. Cit.* 4.
- 29) *Ibid.*
- 30) *Ibid.*
- 31) *Ibid.*
- 32) *Ibid.*
- 33) *Op. Cit.* 26.
- 34) *Ibid.*
- 35) John Stuart Mill—*Principles of Political Economy* (Toronto, 1965)
- 36) *Op. Cit.* 26.
- 37) Notably in *Customs in Common* (Merlin, 1991)
- 38) Christopher Hill—*Liberty Against the Law: Some Seventeenth Century Controversies* (Allen Lane, London, 1996)
- 39) *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1919), quoted by Charles B Maurer in *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1971)
- 40) *Op. Cit.* 26.
- 41) *Op. Cit.* 2.
- 42) *Ibid.*
- 43) *Ibid.*
- 44) *Op. Cit.* 27.
- 45) Richard Holt—*Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1989)
- 46) *Ibid.*
- 47) *Ibid.*
- 48) Thirty-nine people died on May 29 1985 during the European Champions Cup Final match between Liverpool and the Italian club Juventus at Heysel in Belgium. Liverpool fans tried to attack the Juventus fans and panic set in among the Italians. In their alarm they caused a wall to collapse trapping and killing people underneath.
- 49) In 1989 a semi-final match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at the Hillsborough stadium took the lives of 96 Liverpool fans in a crush in the crowd caused by incompetent policing.
- 50) *The Guardian*, March 4, 2000.
- 51) Issue 2, PO Box 467, London E8 3QX, UK.
- 52) *Beginnen: Aufsätze über Sozialismus*, edited by Martin Buber (Cologne, 1924), *Op. Cit.* 39.







# Carry on Camping

Reports from UK Direct Action Camps

**This is a listing of the direct action camps that have been set up, or have continued to be occupied, since the last issue of *Do or Die* was published in August 1999. As well as new camps, some of the older ones are still there—whereas some have won and moved on and some have been evicted. Last year's *Do or Die* had news from 34 direct action camps—in this issue there are only 10.**

This massive reduction may be accounted for by a general diversification of direct action issues and tactics—genetics and globalisation for example. Perhaps it's also because the state has become so used to handling evictions that it just doesn't seem worth the months waiting in one spot—or maybe "the energy just isn't there anymore, man!" Whatever the reason, those camps that have existed have been successful, empowering campaigns and so respect to all those involved. Over the last year or so a noticeable concentration of camp activity has occurred in Essex, the North and in the South West—whereas Wales and East Anglia have been quieter than in past years. One

aspect of camp life that should probably be mentioned is the enormous increase in surveillance and police harassment, especially since the actions on June 18th 1999. At the Gorse Wood camp several people had their benefits cut off—and at least one protester was offered money for information whilst in police custody.

The accounts below were gathered in a variety of ways. Some pieces were written specifically for this article, others are taken from over-the-phone interviews. Both people who had lived in the camps and those who lived locally have contributed. Where campaigns are ongoing, contact details are listed.



## Scotland



## Faslane Peace Camp

Faslane Peace Camp celebrated its 18th year of opposing the nuclear submarine base, and is again under threat of eviction. A fortnight of actions in August 2000, in which there were 90 arrests in the first week, has raised the profile of

the camp, meaning that there is again pressure on the Council to evict. Faslane, to combat this, has now joined the co-operative network Radical Routes and become a housing co-operative with a plan to buy a piece of land in the area and so maintain a constant and permanent presence.

There are always ongoing actions against the base, from regular leafletting and talking to people at the gates, through to convoy actions every few months. Recent successes include stopping the April 2000 convoy for a record 2 hours by locking on to concrete in barrels that had to be moved by forklift, and shutting entry to the base for 2 hours—with one gate blocked for 13 hours!

New energy and enthusiasm is always welcomed at Faslane. To find out more read *Faslane Focus*, published every 4 months. Just send an A4 SAE to: Faslane Peace Camp, Shandon, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, Scotland G84 8HT, UK. Telephone: 01436 820901  
Email: [faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com](mailto:faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com)

## Stanton Moor

There is currently an application to re-open two dormant quarries (at Encliffe and Lees Cross) on the hillside close to the Nine Ladies stone circle on Stanton Moor. If the application is granted to Stancliffe Stone, over 30 acres of land will be

destroyed. Stancliffe Stone was originally granted planning permission in 1952 for the extraction of more than a million tonnes of gritstone, which now contravenes National Park policy. In order to preserve the site permanently, the untested 1995 Environmental Act needs to be enforced. Applications have been submitted by English Heritage for archaeological assessment of the area but are not expected to arise until after the next court hearing in September 2000.

A fully active protest camp has been in occupation of the site since September 1999. Environmental activists have launched a petition and erected tree houses and walkways to assist in protecting the site. Activists from the site visited

London to highlight the plight of Stanton Moor, with nine masked ladies attempting to connect with the powers of the Nine Ladies stones outside various Government offices. Police interest in the protest is growing with regular visits from their notorious yellow and black helicopter. More help and supplies are always needed.

Contact the Nine Ladies Quarry Campaign.  
Tel: 07779 431820 or 07714 779957  
Email: [sparky@nineladies.zoom.co.uk](mailto:sparky@nineladies.zoom.co.uk)  
Web: [www.pages.zoom.co.uk/~nineladies/](http://www.pages.zoom.co.uk/~nineladies/)

## Park Nook

Park Nook camp was set up on the May Bank Holiday of 1999. It is a small site on the corner of an inner city park in Liverpool. The site had formerly been the grounds to a large mansion, which meant that the trees had remained untouched for around 50 years allowing natural growth. Local people have been using the land for a similar amount of time. Cyril Webb, the developers, want to build 3 blocks of luxury flats on the land. However, locals and protesters are pushing for the land to be given 'town green' status, which would mean the Council has a responsibility to look after and preserve it.

People are maintaining a constant presence on site and are awaiting an outcome from the Council. The developers, a small company, seem to be waiting for the protest to die down and for people to leave the site which, of course, is not happening.

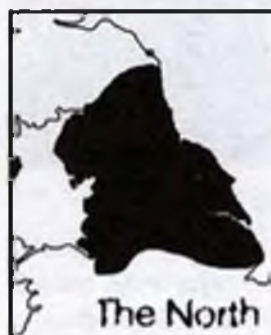
Contact via: Liverpool EFL, c/o 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1, UK. Email: [liverpoollef@hotmail.com](mailto:liverpoollef@hotmail.com)

## Arthur's and Cedar Wood

The campaign to stop Manchester Airport's second runway has been going on for many years with direct action campaigns peaking in the spring of 1997. Then land was occupied in the Bollin Valley from the summer of 1998 through to the autumn of 1999.

This second phase of occupation occurred because it emerged that a new belt of trees would be felled and coppiced in order to create a clear line of sight for aircraft using Runway 2. And surprise, surprise, this belt of felling that was always known to be necessary was not included in the public inquiry. Interestingly enough, this belt of trees is on land owned by the National Trust (NT), who claim to 'protect and preserve' land in their care. It seems, though, that the NT, who had initially kicked up a fuss, were bought off by the runway developers.

Although the land was owned by the National Trust, the actual camp was evicted by Manchester Airport. This was against the rules, as Manchester Airport had been granted a licence only to fell the trees and not to evict. The nature of the 'work'



The North



done on the trees varied from felling at the top of the valley to coppicing at the bottom. The Airport and the NT produced a flyer claiming that it would be beneficial to the valley ecosystem, although tree experts have emphasised the damage done to valley ecosystems by removing the upper part of trees.

Much of the direct action during the campaign was directed at the NT, who were seen to be letting down the nation whose heritage they are supposed to be preserving and protecting. NT owned Quarry Bank Mill was occupied as protesters had a picnic and handed out information in the Museum. This was particularly appropriate as Quarry Bank Mill is famous for Luddite loom breaking. A banner drop was also carried out at the NT HQ in London. Protesters were invited in to talk to the boss. Locals fought for a judicial review, but to no avail.

Arthur's Wood was evicted in June 1998 and Cedar Wood in October 1999. At the Cedar Wood eviction, tunnels were occupied for a record-breaking time—although this record has now been broken! At first, the protester-nominated safety officer was not allowed on site. However, one activist managed to get into the Undersheriff's press conference and questioned this decision in front of the media. A BBC report described the Undersheriff as 'sloping off with his tail between his legs' as a result!

## Birmingham

Britain's first toll motorway—the Birmingham Northern Relief Road (BNRR)—has dogged local residents for 20 years, through three route changes along the 27 mile route from Colehill to Cannock, through the Midlands' dwindling green belt land, affecting over 1,000 homes, 65 farms, 3 schools and over 100 sites of archaeological/ecological interest.

Direct action started some 3 years ago, encompassing 7 protest camps along the route. The first, Boundary Cottage, was evicted after the death of 'Sorted Dave'. Police used this sad event to bring everyone outside to clear the scene, thus declaring the cottage vacant and moving in to seize possession.

Moneymore was evicted after a 2 week battle with bailiffs on duty 24 hours a day and under orders to be finished by Christmas. Protesters then looked to set up a new site in an old nuclear bunker at Shenstone. Within the hour, six protesters were arrested and bailed off-route.

The Greenwood Site was evicted after more trickery. Police lured out the one remaining



protester for a friendly chat—the sixty friendly officers 'hiding' outside then declared the site vacant.

Within the last year, a new site was set up at the Spinney and things were looking good until June 18th saw protesters off-site to visit London. The two protesters on site were awoken and told they had an hour to leave or face arrest. The site was then completely trashed under the nose of the security firm on 24 hour guard. Police blamed angry locals. All valuables were untouched, but materials were slashed and smashed.

Since then the remaining protesters and locals have continued a policy of rearguard actions. At present, Midland Expressway Ltd. are looking for someone with a spare £700 million, as the old backers have pulled out. Currently short listed are 8 high street banks. There is also currently no contracted builder and we believe that a renewed campaign of direct action and a well run site could win this campaign. For more details contact: 0121 643 9117.

## Siston Common

Siston Common was set up to resist completion of the A4174 outside Bristol and the trashing of the Sustrans cycle path. It was predicted that the new road would bring suburban sprawl—and this is now happening.

After five years of effective legal challenges, a protest camp was set up in November 1998, attracting flak from the "You're not from here" brigade of locals, who want the new road to divert





traffic from their villages. During the campaign, by South Gloucestershire Council's own admission there were 94 "security incidents"—21 considered "serious". Everything from a two-week building occupation through to strange markings on the road. The point was made, and it all cost them money. Local support was won, and come the eviction in June 1999 local people had—thanks largely, it must be said, to successful media tarring—a better understanding of what people were trying to do. The road will be built—but no one locally can say they didn't know about the environmental threat it poses. Just one battle in a big on-going war nationwide. For more details telephone: 0797 999 0389.

## Hagbourne Copse

Hagbourne Copse protest camp won earlier this year saving over 200 oak and ash trees from industrial development. Hagbourne Copse, a 5 acre site of protected woodland next to Junction 16 of the M4 in Wiltshire had progressively been cut into over the last 10 years by industrial development in the form of the Euroway Industrial Estate, which now totally surrounds the copse. Additionally a nearby farm, which was bought for £50,000 pounds 8 years ago, had been sold off to industrial development for £8 million.

On arrival, it was found that the area of woodland had been dangerously neglected. Drainage was completely blocked with rotten matter which had caused the water table to rise to 3ft below the ground at the peak of summer. This had caused irreparable damage to the 60-80ft oaks and ashes. All but one of the silver birch trees had died (rotting from their roots upward), most of the blackthorn was dead and the hazel was growing at an angle of about 30 degrees.

The estate agents dealing with the sale (Loveday) have enormous interest in industrial development and strategic housing, as shown by their adverts. The land owners names had been kept quiet, but it was discovered that it was owned by three London solicitors. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were trying to buy the copse, but their first bid had failed. The implications of this were considered and people decided on direct action.

Legal occupation of the land was gained using Section 6 of the *Criminal Law Act 1977*, with recorded notification being sent to those concerned. Work to lower the existing water table (i.e. clearing the neglected drainage system) was started. Nets and walkways were then erected high in the trees, and a clean active protest camp was set up on the ground with the number of protesters kept low until the surrounding bluebells had a chance to seed. The local press was informed of this local plight and flyers were given out in the surrounding areas. A local person then visited and

got a petition together to secure the woodland's future. Pressure was focused on Swindon County Council.

Two months of occupation went by until only two of the bidders remained, both with the intention of looking after this beautiful woodland and making it into a nature reserve for all to enjoy. The camp then closed and work was started to remove any trace of the protesters' presence. Many thanks to everyone who took part.

## Gorse Wood

Once upon a time, in a county which was a vast forest, lived some magical woodlands where the trees danced nightly, only to be paused by the sun of each new dawn.

Until a greedy company by the name of Laing decided to halt the dance for evermore by piercing the heart of the woods with a six lane, £360 million 'village bypass'. They proclaimed it would serve as an M25 relief road; an outer London orbital motorway. With glee they planned thousands of houses, incinerators and golf courses. But they failed to consult the badgers or the skylarks, the foxes or the owls.

Many local people were unaware of the monstrosity until the bluebells flowered and a band of merry activists came to occupy the land. They set up site in protest at the monstrous greedy plans to take this stretch of green near the Essex town of Chelmsford.

Many moons waxed and waned, through summer haze, autumn glow and misty winter frosts as the activists worked and played to protect the sacred land where life was given and adored.

But when the frosts were ending and the trees sprung forth new buds, the Sheriff's men descended on the peaceful magic woods. The people climbed the trees and descended underground to inconvenience and dissuade their road plans to the sum of £8 million.

And finally when the trees were felled and the local people finally understood the extent of the lies the council had told them, tears of sadness were wept. But there were tears of joy, as a copse was saved where the people once had lived. And the wise oak who has stood for 400 years, still stands there now today.

## Hockley

The protest camp at Hockley in Essex, near to Gorse Wood, was set up on the 26th July 1999 in response to Countryside Residential's plans to build 66 mammoth luxury homes, each consisting of 6 or 7 bedrooms, 4 toilets and 2 bathrooms.





The area of land under threat had been divided into plots in the 1920s and 30s and sold for next to nothing to people who were moving out of London who used the land to build their own houses. In the 1970s, however, Rochford District Council declared the land 'public open space', and denied the owner-occupiers the right to improve their own bungalows, therefore causing the properties to dilapidate. This allowed the council to then repurchase the plots for very low prices, for example £3,000 per plot, when the plots were worth about seven times this price at the time. Some residents, however, took the council to court over this dubious practise and forced the council to pay the proper prices for the plots, leaving the council owning pockets of land which were left fallow in amongst the remaining bungalows.

Then, ten years ago, the council put a fence around the area of land, which falls within the Green Belt and put it out to tender. Therefore self-built homes were forced to decay in order for the council to profit from selling Green Belt land to a private developer.

The camp, set up in July 1999, was based on council-owned land for one month, before it then moved on to privately owned land. The developer then applied to the court for an eviction, but because the land occupied was not yet owned by the developer, the court ruled that it would be illegal for the developer to evict.

On securing ownership in early February 2000, security guards totally sealed off the camp. Protesters were allowed to come out for water and medicine, then eventually for food as well. The camp remained in this state for 20 days, in which time, locals and protesters suffered extreme harassment from the security guards. People were stopped and questioned on a private right of way and visitors to private houses were assaulted. The police, however, declared that the behaviour of the security was 'reasonable'. Protesters eventually drifted off as the conditions under which they were living resembled a concentration camp.

A demonstration in mid-February finally prompted the security to enter the camp and 10 days later, the camp was fenced off and felling began. The remaining three protesters were evicted, but the local campaign is ongoing. Telephone: 01702 206181 or 0831 717815.

## Ashingdon

The Ashingdon site was located in a 6 acre area of woodland and wildlife habitat

from which the council removed Green Belt status in the 1980s. Wilcon Homes, the developers, plan to build 73 houses on the plot which is the only bit of woodland in the area.

Initially, planning permission was not granted by the Council for 4 consecutive months as the development was not in line with local planning regulations. However, the developer threatened to appeal which could have cost the Council £100,000, and that is a surcharge that would have come directly out of the pockets of individual councillors, so planning permission was quickly granted.

The local people have been resisting the plans for development on a couple of grounds. Planning regulations specify that in an urban development in a rural area, the maximum number of houses that can be built is 46, whereas in Ashingdon planning permission is for 73. Local people have also managed to register the land under threat as a 'Village Green', under the *Commons Registration Act 1965*. This Act states that land that has been used as common land for 20 years should stay as such.

The protest camp was set up in early February 2000 and received plenty of police attention from the beginning. Harassment of protesters and intimidation of local people became the norm, as had previously occurred on the Gorse Wood and the Hockley sites, also in Essex. Despite the victory of the land being declared a Village Green, the protesters were evicted on 9th May 2000. The Undersheriff and his men surrounded the site and evicted 10 people. The tower that had been built lasted for 5 days.

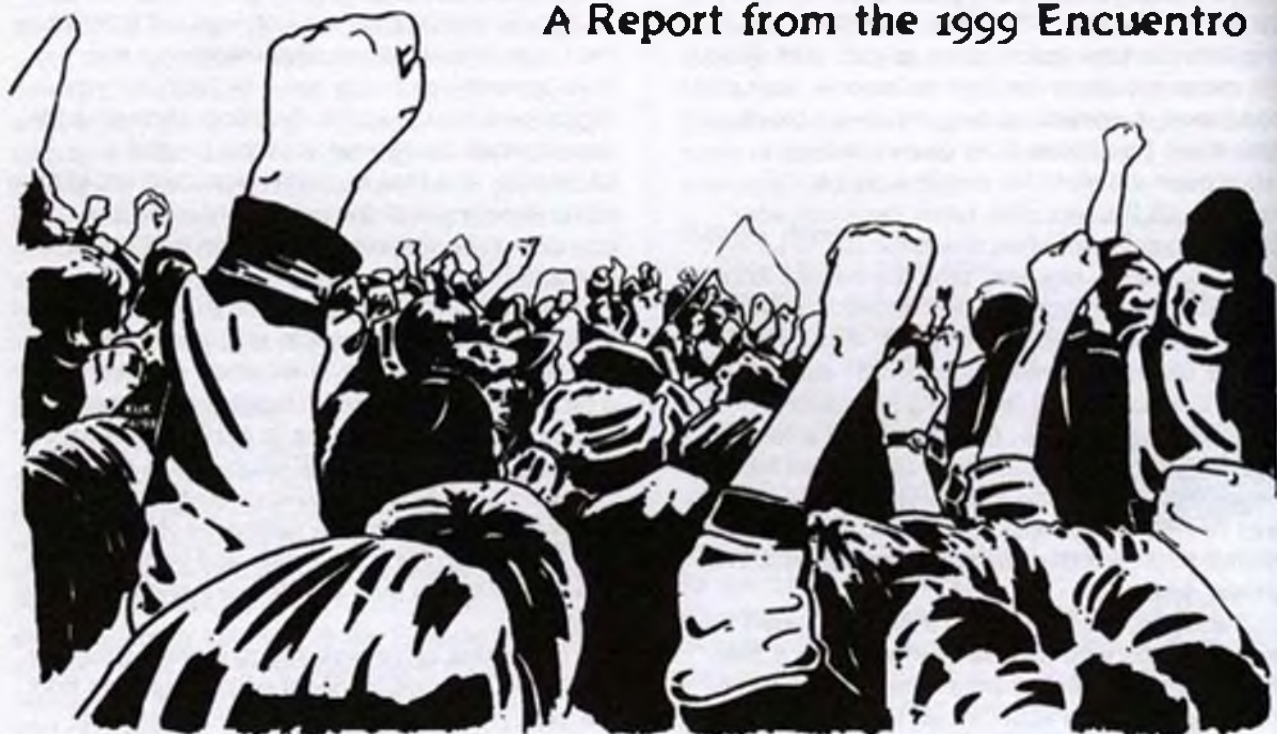
Legal action may now be taken against the Undersheriff of Essex by the RSPB for evicting during the nesting season breaching Section 19 of the 1981 Wildlife Act. Despite all of this the local campaign to stop the development continues. Telephone Golden Cross Action Group on: 01702 541167.★





# Amazonian Adventures!

A Report from the 1999 Encuentro



In 1996 the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) invited various individuals, groups, movements and political parties from around the world to meet in Chiapas, Mexico to discuss the commonalities in their diverse struggles. Called the 'Encuentro<sup>1</sup> for humanity and against neoliberalism' it drew thousands of people from the world over. An Encuentro for the Americas only was held in Brasil<sup>2</sup> during December 1999. Here is a report from one of the two UK people who attended as observers.<sup>3</sup>

I have spent five days on a boat descending the River Amazon, from the central Amazonian metropolis of Manaus, to the eastern city of Belém do Pará. We are three hundred strong, each swinging in our tiny allotted hammock space, or pacing around the decks like caged wildcats. My morning is spent watching kamikaze *caboclos* (river-dwellers) and indigenous people paddle their dug-out canoes directly at our boat. We throw food and clothes—carefully wrapped in plastic bags to keep them dry—at their tiny boats. We cheer, as do the *caboclo* kids when anyone scores a direct hit. The *caboclo* parents, generally, do not.

Later we round yet another river-bend, and the walls of rainforest part to reveal a dense cluster of skyscrapers on the horizon. This is Belém, capital of the Amazon, and location of the latest Zapatista-inspired Encuentro. The boat erupts into spontaneous applause and people embrace. We have made it back to civilisation! Excitement and smiles pervade the boat.

This strikes me as funny—in the peculiar sense of the word—as I want to destroy so-called

civilisation as it is now. Funnier still, as in my days of conversations with dozens of people on the boat, they also, in general, feel the same. But we are undeniably comforted to step back into a concrete world. I think at the time that this week in Belém will be full of contradictions, and much may not be as it seems...

## Background to the Encuentros

The first Zapatista-inspired Encuentro in 1996 was an attempt to get everyone from around the world who was interested in the issues Mexico's Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) were fighting about—'land, liberty and democracy' to use one of their slogans—to discuss possible commonalities. Importantly, the first Encuentro was also designed to fulfill several other functions. Firstly, to give an international 'democratic' mandate for the use and continuation of their armed struggle. Meeting with hundreds of Church groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political parties and social movements was important support for the EZLN struggle. Secondly,



the Zapatista army used the Encuentro to keep a high profile, both nationally and internationally, making it harder for the Mexican government and army to escalate the war against them. The EZLN, as an army and social movement that spent 11 years organising and training before they made themselves publicly known on the 1st January 1994, are supreme tacticians. To believe that the first Encuentro was much more than a strategic military decision is merely buying into the romantic Zapatista myth.

This first Encuentro was a huge success. About 6,000 people from trade unions, peasants movements, NGOs, left wing political parties, church groups and autonomous extra-parliamentary oppositional movements<sup>4</sup> from many traditions travelled to Chiapas in Mexico. Common problems were elucidated—capitalism and patriarchy to name but two. However, UK input was minimal, with reports of less than half-a-dozen UK-based people attending, and of these most were academics or curious individuals already travelling in Mexico. As far as I am aware nobody involved in the UK direct action movement attended.

Following the success of the first Encuentro, groups in Spain organised a second in September 1997, again attended by thousands from a similar range of groups. Several UK Earth First! and Reclaim The Streets activists travelled to Spain for this. At this Encuentro there was serious concern about the way it had been organised, and several delegations from 'Third World' countries were concerned about the domineering attitudes, ways of working and cultural assumptions of some Europeans. Out of this came the idea of a purely Latin American Encuentro.

After several rumours and emails about various Latin American countries hosting an Encuentro, in early 1999 there were suggestions that Brasil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST—landless peasants movement, see *Do or Die* Number 7, pp.88-96) were to host a Latin American Encuentro. In June 1999 an email from Subcommandante Marcos of the EZLN stated that they endorsed the invitation to go to Belém in December 1999 for an Encuentro to include all of the Americas.

## Confusion Over the Organisers

The next stage in the story is still unclear to me, and to most other participants I spoke to at the Belém Encuentro, so I will start with what I consider to be factually correct, then move on to the speculation. It is clear that the EZLN had endorsed an Encuentro, but they did not state who was hosting it. It is clear that at some stage the MST were involved in the Encuentro. However, the MST (probably Latin America's largest and most important social movement) deliberately did not

publicly participate in the Encuentro at all. Finally, it became clear that Belém City Council, run by the radical left group within Brasil's main opposition political party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, the Workers' Party, more-or-less equivalent to the UK's pre-Blair Labour Party), was the driving force behind the Encuentro.

There is confusion as to how and why this situation arose. I had heard in advance that the MST were not attending the Encuentro, and as they are a social movement I have great respect for I wanted to ask them why. Following email communication I visited the offices of MST in Belém. It seems that initially the EZLN had suggested to the MST that it would be good if they hosted an Encuentro, and from this beginning several Brazilian groups met to discuss the idea. The MST wanted it to be held in 2001, to give adequate time to network, organise and make the event a success—and possibly to be global, not just Latin America. All the left-wing political parties wanted it in 2000, as 2001 is an election year in Brasil, and they wanted to concentrate on that instead. The various parties then gained control of the Encuentro, and the MST, feeling that it would not fulfill its potential given the short amount of time to organise it, decided to pull out. It seems that the further building of an international movement 'against neoliberalism and for humanity', was sold short by the desire of Brasil's political parties for electoral success.

## The Opening Ceremony

The local council booked the main square in Belém for the opening for the Encuentro. It was a hot and steamy tropical night, with a great diversity of people loitering around. Hundreds of red flags from the political parties fluttered: the PT, the Communist Party (PC do B), the Socialist Party of Unified Workers (PSTU), the Socialist Party (PSB), the Bolshevik League and many more. Competing were the black flags of various anarchist groups, many of whom were wearing masks to cover their faces. Many looked a lot like UK punks circa 1979—but not quite so pasty! Spread around these two noticeable 'types' were a smattering of indigenous people, lots of smartly dressed black men from *Quilombos* (communal lands where blacks began new communities after liberating themselves from slavery) and some baggy-trousered youngsters from the radical black hip-hop movement. As well as this there were thousands of perhaps bemused locals who had come to see what was going on. It was an amazing sight—every class, culture and subculture from a continent-sized country packed into one square in an Amazonian city. The week was going to be great.

A huge video screen cranked into action. Subcommandante Marcos gave a half-hour speech,





*Do or Die makes it as far as the radical black hip-hop movement of north eastern Brasil*

live over the internet, from the Lacondon jungle to the Amazon rainforest. This was a shockingly powerful use of the internet. 'Third World' revolutionary to 'Third World' revolutionaries—direct, fast and unmediated communication. Someone comments that Marcos is the only person in the world who could speak Spanish in Brasil and get several thousand people to stand in silence and attentively listen. The power of the symbolism of the Zapatistas was stark.

After Marcos we got speaker after speaker, interspersed with some Indigenous peoples doing their traditional dancing. Two people from the EZLN spoke followed by eleven others. Six were from left-wing parties, then one each for the unions, the indigenous, the libertarians and the landless, and then the odd one out Danielle Mitterrand (yes, wife of the dead ex-French leader, representing the white European elite?). This unfortunately about summed up the ideas of 'equality' and 'fairness' that the powers behind the Encuentro seemed to have. As many people from political parties spoke as all the rest put together! Those with power—the political parties, the funders (the local council and Mitterrand)—kept power, and those most marginalised stayed without it. Nobody from any portion of Brasil's very strong black movement participated in the opening of the conference, no women's movement, no gay liberation. Unfortunately I could see that the MST had a point about not wanting to be involved in this!

As the speeches went on the crowd became increasingly agitated. With each speaker from a political party, those in the crowd from the other parties, and anyone else who didn't like them booed, chanted and heckled. This came to a crux when the new PT leader got on stage. He got comprehensively shouted down. It was the

equivalent of Tony Blair addressing London's May Day anti-capitalism conference if the Conservative Party were in power. I can't believe none of the organisers saw it coming. It all ended in an on-stage slanging match between José Dirceu, new head of PT, the local (and more radical) PT mayor Edmilson Rodrigues and various sections of the crowd. This start didn't bode well for the days ahead.

The politics behind this farce are perhaps more complicated. Some people told me that the bouts of booing and clapping were carefully choreographed by the various Trotskyist groups. The main point of it being to get José Dirceu shouted off stage, so setting the situation up to be 'rescued' by our heroic mayor, and 'star' of the Encuentro, Edmilson Rodrigues. The basic political point being to humiliate Dirceu, as the new boss, and elevate the political standing of Rodrigues in particular, but generally the radical left faction within the PT. In short, the opening ceremony for thousands of people from all over the world was trashed by left-wing political parties—primarily the PT—for their own advantage. Not really in the spirit of Zapatismo.

The next day was the first day of plenaries and workshops. The concentration of power around the political parties continued. The format of the plenaries and 'workshops' was a panel of, usually old, very well educated men, from the whiter end of the skin-colour spectrum, with certainly no Afro-Brazilian's or indigenous people present<sup>5</sup> (except in their own workshops about 'them'). These panels had the same composition as the elite of Brazilian society. The *partidos*, the political party people, who are quite used to this way of being organised, seemed happy enough. However, there was great anger from some (most?) of the indigenous, blacks, anarchists, independents and others I spoke to, along with the few other Europeans who were there. That night people from several groups hatched a plan...

## The Encuentro Splits

I arrive a bit late after a night of too much drink and too long talking to find the plenary underway with much fewer numbers. Meanwhile outside under an open-sided marquee spilling out with people, tense discussions were taking place. I asked around. The Encuentro had split into two: the official Encuentro, now attended, seemingly by the *partidos*—political party people—and the 'alternative' or 'real' Encuentro as some labelled it, outside in the cafeteria area. The alternative groups are a mix of well, everyone bar the parties. The FZLN (the political organisation of the Zapatistas) delegation appear, telling us, to rapturous shouting, that we are the 'real Encuentro'.



Several important points are discussed. The issue of the cost of the Encuentro is addressed. We have all been told that we need a registration card to speak. It costs money to register. Thus those with no money have no voice. Stories are relayed of people being turned away at the gates of the University where the Encuentro is being held because they have no registration card. The University is next to some *favelas* (slums) and various people say that some people from those *favelas* want to join in with the Encuentro, but cannot as they do not have the fifteen *reals* (R\$15) required for entry.<sup>6</sup> My experience was that the Encuentro was predominantly middle-class. There were of course poorer people around, but it was dominated by the better-off. Given the expense of getting in, and the commercial prices of the food and drink for sale, it could have been no different. The alternative Encuentro decided that anyone present could speak, regardless of whether they had a registration card. The question of those without the money for a registration card to get into the University did not seem to get structurally resolved (I gave my card away to get others in, as I could play 'stupid foreigner' to get access to the University if necessary).

A second issue tackled was what to do with the rest of the Encuentro. The discussion focused on the issue of participation and opening up the participation in the workshops and plenary sessions, both to allow more people to participate and for a greater diversity of people to participate. With the benefit of hindsight this seems a mistake, however it is easy to understand why we focused on participation.

Participation was lacking until the Encuentro split into two. This clearly needed to be rectified. But the split was only ostensibly about participation. It was really about very different views of what constitutes 'politics' and 'political action', not merely methodology. I suspect most of those in the alternative Encuentro wanted decentralised, participative, directly democratic politics, linking distinct groups, while the official Encuentro was a vehicle to promote electoral party politics with its attendant tendencies towards centralisation, accumulation of power by your representative, and thoughtless adherence to 'the party line'. The focus on participation was a good start, but was not followed through to logical conclusions. We got side-lined into thinking about methodological rather than political issues.

Meanwhile, the focus on participation could not progress further, partly due to the EZLN and FZLN delegations. The EZLN delegation was rarely seen. This was probably due to the Brazilian government stating that anyone from armed groups found in Brazil would be arrested. Thus there was tension that the police may try to arrest the EZLN

participants (and others from armed groups). This tension was heightened by the news that the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) spokesperson had been deported back to Colombia before arriving at the Encuentro.

The FZLN adopted contradictory positions over the days of the Encuentro, at times stating that we were the 'true' Encuentro, then at others negotiating the two back together, with minimal changes made to the 'official' Encuentro that we were all supposed to join back with. I think this is because there was intense pressure on the EZLN and FZLN from Belém City Council, whose Encuentro this had become, to repair the split and make the council look good. Also, there is the 'spirit' of Zapatismo, of everyone putting aside their differences and talking in true dialogue about how we can draw our struggles together against common enemies. This would look hollow if the Encuentro was permanently split.

The EZLN and FZLN were placed in a very difficult position—with conflicting demands made on them by an event whose organisation seemed to have little input from them, yet when it started it thrust them on to centre stage and then collapsed. However, the Zapatistas failed in one important respect. Why did they negotiate 'for' the alternative Encuentro people (the excluded) with the official Encuentro people (the powerful)? Why didn't people from several, or all sectors negotiate? Why should the Zapatistas negotiate 'on behalf of' the Afro-Brazilians, the homeless, the indigenous peoples or the urban anarcho-punks? It is interesting to note that the EZLN and FZLN have not, to my knowledge after thorough searching, written anything substantial about their experience of the Brazilian Encuentro.

The 'deification' of the Zapatistas was, and is, an important problem. Many are attracted by their politics and action, however some are attracted to the myth and mystique and their beautiful communiqués, and others by the political capital they gain by associating with them. According to the Zapatista Committee of Ceará from Brazil, one of the few critical organising voices, the political parties were merely giving formal support to the Encuentro, mainly as a political marketing strategy, to be seen as standing with the Zapatistas (except the faction of the PT who run Belém City Council, who had clear political reasons for becoming highly involved in the Encuentro organisation). This was disgustingly apparent as I engaged in conversation with a man from an indigenous group from the north east of Brazil who was livid that the EZLN should get five-star treatment, while nobody had even bothered to meet him at the airport!

This article may make the Encuentro sound like it was all political high drama, and yes, there were some dramatic moments. However, most people



were not heavily involved in negotiations and sorting out problems, but just got on with organising things themselves for themselves. The official Encuentro sessions became less and less well attended, except those for specific excluded sectors, for example, the Afro-Brazilians who just reorganised themselves as they saw fit, but at the time allotted by the 'official' Encuentro. Thousands of informal conversations happened, while those with similar interests would be passed to each other 'word of mouth', then organise meetings. In this way I ended up in meetings with Brasil's hard-core animal rights activists, the urban equivalents of the MST who squat buildings, the radical black hip-hop community from north east Brasil, São Paulo anarchists, as well as dozens more.

It was fascinating to hear whether people had heard of Earth First! and Reclaim The Streets in Brasil, and if so what they thought of them and their actions such as the Carnival Against Capital! in the City of London on June 18th 1999 (see *Do or Die* Number 8, pp.1-34). The Brits quickly acquired the strapline of 'the mad people who took over London's financial centre'. Many people had been inspired by this action, as it was a rare showing of large-scale resistance to the current social order from within the 'First World'. This was doubly so for the anti-WTO actions in Seattle on November 30th 1999. The anarchist groups in particular had heard of EF! and knew about the anti-roads campaigns as well. I gave out lots of recent agit-prop, which was warmly received.

Seeing the London RTS poster depicting the MST marching on the City of London pinned in the MST offices in Belém brought a smile to my face. The spoof newspaper idea (e.g. the *Evading Standards* instead of the *Evening Standard*, as used at the March for Social Justice in 1997, and June 18th in 1999) was seen as brilliant and has now jumped to Latin America. Interestingly, Colombia's ELN (Army of National Liberation), the country's second largest guerrilla group, said in their statement to the Encuentro that they "salute the nuclei of rebels targeting stock markets around the world!"<sup>17</sup>

After five days of great conversation, meeting amazing people, and watching the excellent entertainment every evening, the end of the Encuentro was a total farce. The Zapatista

delegations, Belém City Council and other groups had somehow brokered an agreement, and the two Encuentros joined together for the last day. At the time I had lost all interest in the Encuentro, as it seemed most others had too, so I mainly just carried on with my informal meetings. However, there were frantic efforts to agree on a 'final declaration of the second Encuentro'.<sup>18</sup> This document, mostly bland sloganeering, was clearly not consensual as there had been two almost entirely separate Encuentros, and many people had given up on anything 'official' by the final day. It seemed to me to be merely a face-saving exercise

for Belém City council, and an attempt to present a united front to the media, and hence to the general public. To me it smacked of a desperate attempt at unifying disparate groups against a common enemy of capitalism, while there had been little attempt at achieving this over the five days by the groups behind the official Encuentro.

### Lessons to Learn?

There might be several things that our movement in the UK can learn from this. The experience of the Encuentro should again show that our movement should not work with leftist political parties. We do not share their hierarchical, centralising and authoritarian politics. They will marginalise any group if it helps them towards their political goals, as clearly seen in the Brazilian context above. For instance, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and Workers' Power (WP) are very excited by the words 'anti-capitalist' and by what our

movement has been doing over the past few years. If the SWP's sister party in Brasil, the PSTU, will help trash the Zapatistas and an international gathering for their gain, we should have no illusions as to whether the SWP and others will trash the direct action movement when the time is right. The Brazilian experience may be no different to what happens around and after the IMF/World Bank Ministerial meeting in Prague in September 2000. Our movement, in my mind, must remain political party-free. However, we should be careful to state our clear political decisions as to why we have not made alliances with certain groups, and be honest to them when we explain our reasoning.

We should also recognise the limitations of events that have a totally open-door policy on





attending, and little or no attempt at structure within the event itself. Examples of these sorts of events include the Encuentros, anti-roads camps, and the 'guerrilla gardening action' on May 1st in Parliament Square, London. Examples of the limitations of totally open invitations to attend include: the drunken aggressive man at an anti-road camp means, for example, that many people with children do not attend. Open attendance is not really open attendance for all groups—often the powerful retain and entrench their power whilst the powerless remain powerless. Compare the Workers' Party and Belém City Council to the Afro-Brazilian movement at the Encuentro. Closer to home compare the experience of the organisers of the 'guerrilla gardening' and their friends with that of 'the ordinary punter' in London on May 1st—the organisers were empowered enough to organise their exit from Parliament Square, but the people in Trafalgar Square without organisers remained powerless doing exactly as the police ordered.

The lack of structure at events presents further difficulties. When situations arise that are problematic we have to start from scratch to think about how to deal with them, and the powerful again retain more control of 'sorting things out' than the powerless. The fact that the Zapatista delegations ended up negotiating 'for' the people involved in the 'real' Encuentro while Belém City Council ended up negotiating 'for' the 'official' Encuentro is a good example of how the lack of structure and a new problem ends with the powerful entrenching their position. Likewise, when the Cenotaph monument was painted with graffiti on May 1st, it was the organisers and other well connected (powerful) people who attempted to 'sort out' the 'mess' by appearing on television and in the print media. The mass of people who participated on the day were as voiceless as ever, whereas those whose opinions are more often heard, again had them aired.

I see some further parallels between the Encuentros and the recent mass actions in London. The first Encuentro was a great idea whose time had come. It was well planned, well attended, and opened up whole areas of new political space. The same could be said of the day of action against financial centres on June 18th 1999. Many people were inspired by the Encuentro, and pushed for another, a repeat. This was done, with a second Encuentro in Spain. Here the first cracks began to show. Here some groups saw they could get involved for political gain for their groups or themselves, not the benefit of the movement generally. London's November 30th event at Euston railway station was similar, with people there for many different, often conflicting reasons, and not primarily fighting oppression in general or acting in solidarity with the Seattle

protesters and the railworkers. By the Brasil Encuentro and the May 1st 'action', some groups are trying to repeat past successes, but the events are increasingly dominated by disparate groups wanting to latch onto an idea, the result being unfocused, disappointing and hijacked events. The lack of a clear idea of what was to be achieved by having the event, compounded by open access and almost no structure contributed, if not caused, the severe problems with both events.

It is not all negative, though. The international network Peoples' Global Action (see *Do or Die* Number 8, pp.4-5) was borne out of the Encuentro in Spain. Unlike the Encuentros the PGA has some clear limits on participation; groups should strive to adhere to the PGA hallmarks. This means it is almost entirely composed of social movements rather than political parties and NGOs. Groups and movements are invited to the conference by those already involved. The PGA conferences are smaller and seem more focused. The PGA has also been effective in inspiring people to take action; the last two ministerial meetings of the World Trade Organisation have taken place under siege, partly as a result of PGA calls for action. The PGA is also attempting to build a continuing network of communication and solidarity, where the meetings and calls for action are felt to be owned by the network. Thus we should be optimistic about our situation in the UK—the experience of the recent London mass actions may well lead us in new directions of more focused action, more inspiration and more extensive and real networks.★

## Notes

- 1) The direct English translation of 'Encuentro' is 'an encounter'. The equivalent term within the radical ecological/direct action movement is 'gathering'. The 'Encuentro' held in Brasil was called the 'Encontro'—Portuguese for 'encounter'.
- 2) I spell Brasil as it is spelt by Brazilians, as I think we should use the name they give their country.
- 3) The reader should note that I have done my best to present a personal and accurate reflection of the Encuentro. However, it was all experienced in a second language in ferocious tropical heat, in a completely different culture. There are bound to be errors of translation, cultural misunderstanding, lapses of memory, mis-information etc. for which I apologise in advance.
- 4) I consider UK EFL groups to be in the latter category!
- 5) In Brasil racism is brutal, but slightly different from the UK. It is not black/white, but a tendency to discriminate against the 'more black/less white' by the 'less black/more white'. Few people are what people in the UK may consider 'white', yet see themselves as white and discriminate against those they consider 'not white'. Culturally distinct groups, e.g. indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, are highly discriminated against.
- 6) R\$15 is about 3 days work at minimum salary rates (R\$100 per month), or equivalent to about £60 in the UK using UK minimum salary rates, or about £30 using Jobseekers Allowance as equivalent rates to Brasil's national minimum wage.
- 7) Said in a main plenary on the last day of the Encuentro, from a written statement for the Encuentro by the ELN.
- 8) Another confusion is whether this was the second or third Encuentro. The 1996 one in Chile was the first intercontinental Encuentro and the second was in Spain—yet the Brazilian Encuentro was often termed the second Encuentro for the Americas.



Give up



# Activism

With a  
New Postscript!



Pavlov is alive and well...

In 1999, in the aftermath of the June 18th global day of action, a pamphlet called *Reflections on June 18th* was produced by some people in London, as an open-access collection of "contributions on the politics behind the events that occurred in the City of London on June 18, 1999". Contained in this collection was an article called 'Give up Activism' which has generated quite a lot of discussion and debate both in the UK and internationally, being translated into several languages and reproduced in several different publications.<sup>1</sup> Here we republish the article together with a new postscript by the author addressing some comments and criticisms received since the original publication.

One problem apparent in the June 18th day of action was the adoption of an activist mentality. This problem became particularly obvious with June 18th precisely because the people involved in organising it and the people involved on the day tried to push beyond these limitations. This piece is no criticism of anyone involved—rather an attempt to inspire some thought on the challenges that confront us if we are really serious in our intention of doing away with the capitalist mode of production.

## Experts

By 'an activist mentality' what I mean is that people think of themselves primarily as activists and as belonging to some wider community of activists. The activist identifies with what they do and thinks of it as their role in life, like a job or career. In the same way some people will identify with their job as a doctor or a teacher, and instead of it being something they just happen to be doing, it becomes an essential part of their self-image.

The activist is a specialist or an expert in social change. To think of yourself as being an activist means to think of yourself as being somehow privileged or more advanced than others in your appreciation of the need for social change, in the knowledge of how to achieve it and as leading or being in the forefront of the practical struggle to create this change.

Activism, like all expert roles, has its basis in the division of labour—it is a specialised separate task. The division of labour is the foundation of



class society, the fundamental division being that between mental and manual labour. The division of labour operates, for example, in medicine or education—instead of healing and bringing up kids being common knowledge and tasks that everyone has a hand in, this knowledge becomes the specialised property of doctors and teachers—experts that we must rely on to do these things for us. Experts jealously guard and mystify the skills they have. This keeps people separated and disempowered and reinforces hierarchical class society.

A division of labour implies that one person takes on a role on behalf of many others who relinquish this responsibility. A separation of tasks means that other people will grow your food and make your clothes and supply your electricity while you get on with achieving social change. The activist, being an expert in social change, assumes that other people aren't doing anything to change their lives and so feels a duty or a responsibility to do it on their behalf. Activists think they are compensating for the lack of activity by others. Defining ourselves as activists means defining our actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who do social change—whereas of course class struggle is happening all the time.

## Form and Content

The tension between the form of 'activism' in which our political activity appears and its increasingly radical content has only been growing over the last few years. The background of a lot of the people involved in June 18th is of being 'activists' who 'campaign' on an 'issue'. The political progress that has been made in the activist scene over the last few years has resulted in a situation where many people have moved beyond single issue campaigns against specific companies or developments to a rather ill-defined yet nonetheless promising anti-capitalist perspective. Yet although the content of the campaigning activity has altered, the form of activism has not. So instead of taking on Monsanto and going to their headquarters and occupying it, we have now seen beyond the single facet of capital represented by Monsanto and so develop a 'campaign' against capitalism. And where better to go and occupy than what is perceived as being the headquarters of capitalism—the City?

Our methods of operating are still the same as if we were taking on a specific corporation or development, despite the fact that capitalism is not at all the same sort of thing and the ways in which one might bring down a particular company

are not at all the same as the ways in which you might bring down capitalism. For example, vigorous campaigning by animal rights activists has succeeded in wrecking both Consort dog breeders and Hillgrove Farm cat breeders. The businesses were ruined and went into receivership. Similarly the campaign waged against arch-vivisectionists Huntingdon Life Sciences succeeded in reducing their share price by 33%, but the company just about managed to survive by running a desperate PR campaign in the City to pick up prices.<sup>2</sup>

Activism can very successfully accomplish bringing down a business, yet to bring down capitalism a lot more will be required than to simply extend this sort of activity to every business in every sector. Similarly with the targetting of butcher's shops by animal rights activists, the net result is probably only to aid the supermarkets in closing down all the small butcher's shops, thus assisting the process of competition and the 'natural selection' of the marketplace. Thus activists often succeed in destroying one small business while strengthening capital overall.

A similar thing applies with anti-roads activism. Wide-scale anti-roads protests have created opportunities for a whole new sector of capitalism—security, surveillance, tunnellers, climbers, experts and consultants. We are now one 'market risk' among others to be taken into account when bidding for a roads contract. We may have actually assisted the rule of market forces, by forcing out the companies that are weakest and least able to cope. Protest-bashing consultant Amanda Webster says: "The advent of the protest movement will actually provide market advantages to those contractors who can handle it effectively."<sup>3</sup> Again activism can bring down a business or stop a road but capitalism carries merrily on, if anything stronger than before.







These things are surely an indication, if one were needed, that tackling capitalism will require not only a quantitative change (more actions, more activists) but a qualitative one (we need to discover some more effective form of operating). It seems we have very little idea of what it might actually require to bring down capitalism. As if all it needed was some sort of critical mass of activists occupying offices to be reached and then we'd have a revolution...

The form of activism has been preserved even while the content of this activity has moved beyond the form that contains it. We still think in terms of being 'activists' doing a 'campaign' on an 'issue', and because we are 'direct action' activists we will go and 'do an action' against our target. The method of campaigning against specific developments or single companies has been carried over into this new thing of taking on capitalism. We're attempting to take on capitalism and conceptualising what we're doing in completely inappropriate terms, utilising a method of operating appropriate to liberal reformism. So we have the bizarre spectacle of 'doing an action' against capitalism—an utterly inadequate practice.

## Roles

The role of the 'activist' is a role we adopt just like that of policeman, parent or priest—a strange psychological form we use to define ourselves and our relation to others. The 'activist' is a specialist or an expert in social change—yet the harder we cling to this role and notion of what we are, the more we actually impede the change we desire. A real revolution will involve the breaking out of all preconceived roles and the destruction of all specialism—the reclamation of our lives. The seizing control over our own destinies which is the act of revolution will involve the creation of new

selves and new forms of interaction and community. 'Experts' in anything can only hinder this.

The Situationist International developed a stringent critique of roles and particularly the role of 'the militant'. Their criticism was mainly directed against leftist and social-democratic ideologies because that was mainly what they encountered. Although these forms of alienation still exist and are plain to be seen, in our particular milieu it is the liberal activist we encounter more often than the leftist militant. Nevertheless, they share many features in common (which of course is not surprising).

The Situationist Raoul Vaneigem defined roles like this: "Stereotypes are the dominant images of a period... The stereotype is the model of the role; the role is a model form of behaviour. The repetition of an attitude creates a role." To play a role is to cultivate an appearance to the neglect of everything authentic: "we succumb to the seduction of borrowed attitudes." As role-players we dwell in inauthenticity—reducing our lives to a string of clichés—"breaking [our] day down into a series of poses chosen more or less unconsciously from the range of dominant stereotypes."<sup>4</sup> This process has been at work since the early days of the anti-roads movement. At Twyford Down after Yellow Wednesday in December 92, press and media coverage focused on the Dongas Tribe and the dreadlocked countercultural aspect of the protests. Initially this was by no means the predominant element—there was a large group of ramblers at the eviction for example.<sup>5</sup> But people attracted to Twyford by the media coverage thought every single person there had dreadlocks. The media coverage had the effect of making 'ordinary' people stay away and more dreadlocked countercultural types turned up—decreasing the diversity of the protests. More recently, a similar thing has happened in the way in which people drawn to protest sites by the coverage of Swampy they had seen on TV began to replicate in their own lives the attitudes presented by the media as characteristic of the role of the 'eco-warrior'.<sup>6</sup>

"Just as the passivity of the consumer is an active passivity, so the passivity of the spectator lies in his ability to assimilate roles and play them according to official norms. The repetition of images and stereotypes offers a set of models from which everyone is supposed to choose a role."<sup>7</sup> The role of the militant or activist is just one of these roles, and therein, despite all the revolutionary rhetoric that goes with the role, lies its ultimate conservatism.

The supposedly revolutionary activity of the activist is a dull and sterile routine—a constant repetition of a few actions with no potential for change. Activists would probably resist change if it



came because it would disrupt the easy certainties of their role and the nice little niche they've carved out for themselves. Like union bosses, activists are eternal representatives and mediators. In the same way as union leaders would be against their workers actually succeeding in their struggle because this would put them out of a job, the role of the activist is threatened by change. Indeed revolution, or even any real moves in that direction, would profoundly upset activists by depriving them of their role. If *everyone* is becoming revolutionary then you're not so special anymore, are you?

So why do we behave like activists? Simply because it's the easy cowards' option? It is easy to fall into playing the activist role because it fits into this society and doesn't challenge it—activism is an accepted form of dissent. Even if as activists we are doing things which are not accepted and are illegal, the form of activism itself—the way it is like a job—means that it fits in with our psychology and our upbringing. It has a certain attraction precisely because it is not revolutionary.

## We Don't Need Any More Martyrs

The key to understanding both the role of the militant and the activist is self-sacrifice—the sacrifice of the self to 'the cause' which is seen as being separate from the self. This of course has nothing to do with real revolutionary activity which is the seizing of the self. Revolutionary martyrdom goes together with the identification of some cause separate from one's own life—an action against capitalism which identifies capitalism as 'out there' in the City is fundamentally mistaken—the real power of capital is right here in our everyday lives—we re-create its power every day because capital is not a thing but a social relation between people (and hence classes) mediated by things.

Of course I am not suggesting that everyone who was involved in June 18th shares in the adoption of this role and the self-sacrifice that goes with it to an equal extent. As I said above, the problem of activism was made particularly apparent by June 18th precisely because it was an attempt to break from these roles and our normal ways of operating. Much of what is outlined here is a 'worst case scenario' of what playing the role of an activist can lead to. The extent to which we can recognise this within our own movement will give us an indication of how much work there is still to be done.

The activist makes politics dull and sterile and drives people away from it, but playing the role also fucks up the activist herself. The role of the activist creates a separation between ends and means: self-sacrifice means creating a division between the revolution as love and joy in the future but duty and routine now. The worldview of activism is dominated by guilt and duty because the activist

is not fighting for herself but for a separate cause: "All causes are equally inhuman."<sup>8</sup>

As an activist you have to deny your own desires because your political activity is defined such that these things do not count as 'politics'. You put 'politics' in a separate box to the rest of your life—it's like a job... you do 'politics' 9-5 and then go home and do something else. Because it is in this separate box, 'politics' exists unhampered by any real-world practical considerations of effectiveness. The activist feels obliged to keep plugging away at the same old routine unthinkingly, unable to stop or consider, the main thing being that the activist is kept busy and assuages her guilt by banging her head against a brick wall if necessary.

Part of being revolutionary might be knowing when to stop and wait. It might be important to know how and when to strike for maximum effectiveness and also how and when NOT to strike. Activists have this 'We must do something NOW!' attitude that seems fuelled by guilt. This is completely untactical.

The self-sacrifice of the militant or the activist is mirrored in their power over others as an expert—like a religion there is a kind of hierarchy of suffering and self-righteousness. The activist assumes power over others by virtue of her greater degree of suffering ('non-hierarchical' activist groups in fact form a 'dictatorship of the most committed'). The activist uses moral coercion and guilt to wield power over others less experienced in the theology of suffering. Their subordination of themselves goes hand in hand with their subordination of others—all enslaved to 'the cause'. Self-sacrificing politicians stunt their own lives and their own will to live—this generates a bitterness and an antipathy to life which is then turned outwards to wither everything else. They are "great despisers of life... the partisans of absolute







self-sacrifice... their lives twisted by their monstrous asceticism."<sup>9</sup> We can see this in our own movement, for example on site, in the antagonism between the desire to sit around and have a good time versus the guilt-tripping build/fortify/barricade work ethic and in the sometimes excessive passion with which 'lunchouts' are denounced. The self-sacrificing martyr is offended and outraged when she sees others that are not sacrificing themselves. Like when the 'honest worker' attacks the scrounger or the layabout with such vitriol, we know it is actually because she hates her job and the martyrdom she has made of her life and therefore hates to see anyone escape this fate, hates to see anyone enjoying themselves while she is suffering—she must drag everyone down into the muck with her—an equality of self-sacrifice.

In the old religious cosmology, the successful martyr went to heaven. In the modern worldview, successful martyrs can look forward to going down in history. The greatest self-sacrifice, the greatest success in creating a role (or even better, in devising a whole new one for people to emulate—e.g. the eco-warrior) wins a reward in history—the bourgeois heaven.

The old left was quite open in its call for heroic sacrifice: "Sacrifice yourselves joyfully, brothers and sisters! For the Cause, for the Established Order, for the Party, for Unity, for Meat and Potatoes!"<sup>10</sup> But these days it is much more veiled: Vaneigem accuses "young leftist radicals" of "enter[ing] the service of a Cause—the 'best' of all Causes. The time they have for creative activity they squander on handing out leaflets, putting up posters, demonstrating or heckling local politicians. They become militants, fetishising action because others are doing their thinking for them."<sup>11</sup>

This resounds with us—particularly the thing about the fetishising of action—in left groups the

militants are left free to engage in endless busywork because the group leader or guru has the 'theory' down pat, which is just accepted and lapped up—the 'party line'. With direct action activists it's slightly different—action is fetishised, but more out of an aversion to any theory whatsoever.

Although it is present, that element of the activist role which relies on self-sacrifice and duty was not so significant in June 18th. What is more of an issue for us is the feeling of separateness from 'ordinary people' that activism implies. People identify with some weird sub-culture or clique as being 'us' as opposed to the 'them' of everyone else in the world.

## Isolation

The activist role is a self-imposed isolation from all the people we should be connecting to. Taking on the role of an activist separates you from the rest of the human race as someone special and different. People tend to think of their own first person plural (who are you referring to when you say 'we'?) as referring to some community of activists, rather than a class. For example, for some time now in the activist milieu it has been popular to argue for 'no more single issues' and for the importance of 'making links'. However, many people's conception of what this involved was to 'make links' with *other activists* and other campaign groups. June 18th demonstrated this quite well, the whole idea being to get all the representatives of all the various different causes or issues in one place at one time, voluntarily relegating ourselves to the ghetto of good causes.

Similarly, the various networking forums that have recently sprung up around the country—the Rebel Alliance in Brighton, NASA in Nottingham, Riotous Assembly in Manchester, the London Underground etc. have a similar goal—to get all the activist groups in the area talking to each other. I'm not knocking this—it is an essential prerequisite for any further action, but it should be recognised for the extremely limited form of 'making links' that it is. It is also interesting in that what the groups attending these meetings have in common is that they are activist groups—what they are actually concerned with seems to be a secondary consideration.

It is not enough merely to seek to link together all the activists in the world, neither is it enough to seek to transform more people into activists. Contrary to what some people may think, we will not be any closer to a revolution if lots and lots of people become activists. Some people seem to have the strange idea that what is needed is for everyone to be somehow persuaded into becoming activists like us and then we'll have a revolution. Vaneigem says: "Revolution is made everyday



despite, and in opposition to, the specialists of revolution."<sup>12</sup>

The militant or activist is a specialist in social change or revolution. The specialist recruits others to her own tiny area of specialism in order to increase her own power and thus dispel the realisation of her own powerlessness. "The specialist... enrolls himself in order to enroll others."<sup>13</sup> Like a pyramid selling scheme, the hierarchy is self-replicating—you are recruited and in order not to be at the bottom of the pyramid, you have to recruit more people to be under you, who then do exactly the same. The reproduction of the alienated society of roles is accomplished through specialists.

Jacques Camatte in his essay 'On Organization'<sup>14</sup> makes the astute point that political groupings often end up as "gangs" defining themselves by exclusion—the group member's first loyalty becomes to the group rather than to the struggle. His critique applies especially to the myriad of Left sects and groupuscules at which it was directed but it applies also to a lesser extent to the activist mentality.

The political group or party substitutes itself for the proletariat and its own survival and reproduction become paramount—revolutionary activity becomes synonymous with 'building the party' and recruiting members. The group takes itself to have a unique grasp on truth and everyone outside the group is treated like an idiot in need of education by this vanguard. Instead of an equal debate between comrades we get instead the separation of theory and propaganda, where the group has its own theory, which is almost kept secret in the belief that the inherently less mentally able punters must be lured in the organisation with some strategy of populism before the politics are sprung on them by surprise. This dishonest method of dealing with those outside of the group is similar to a religious cult—they will never tell you upfront what they are about.

We can see here some similarities with activism, in the way that the activist milieu acts like a leftist sect. Activism as a whole has some of the characteristics of a "gang". Activist gangs can often end up being cross-class alliances, including all sorts of liberal reformists because they too are 'activists'. People think of themselves primarily as activists and their primary loyalty becomes to the community of activists and not to the struggle as such. The "gang" is illusory community, distracting us from creating a wider community of resistance. The essence of Camatte's critique is an attack on the creation of an interior/exterior division between the group and the class. We come to think of ourselves as being activists and therefore as being separate from and having different interests from the mass of working class people.

Our activity should be the immediate expression of a real struggle, not the affirmation of the separateness and distinctness of a particular group. In Marxist groups the possession of 'theory' is the all-important thing determining power—it's different in the activist milieu, but not that different—the possession of the relevant 'social capital'—knowledge, experience, contacts, equipment etc. is the primary thing determining power.

Activism reproduces the structure of this society in its operations: "When the rebel begins to believe that he is fighting for a higher good, the authoritarian principle gets a fillip."<sup>15</sup> This is no trivial matter, but is at the basis of capitalist social relations. Capital is a social relation between people mediated by things—the basic principle of alienation is that we live our lives in the service of some *thing* that we ourselves have created. If we reproduce this structure in the name of politics that declares itself anti-capitalist, we have lost before we have begun. You cannot fight alienation by alienated means.



## A Modest Proposal

This is a modest proposal that we should develop ways of operating that are adequate to our radical ideas. This task will not be easy and the writer of this short piece has no clearer insight into how we should go about this than anyone else. I am not arguing that June 18th should have been abandoned or attacked, indeed it was a valiant attempt to get beyond our limitations and to create something better than what we have at present. However, in its attempts to break with antique and formulaic ways of doing things it has made clear the ties that still bind us to the past. The criticisms of activism that I have expressed above do not all



apply to June 18th. However there is a certain paradigm of activism which at its worst includes all that I have outlined above and June 18th shared in this paradigm to a certain extent. To exactly what extent is for you to decide.

Activism is a form partly forced upon us by weakness. Like the joint action taken by Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool dockers—we find ourselves in times in which radical politics is often the product of mutual weakness and isolation. If this is the case, it may not even be within our power to break out of the role of activists. It may be that in times of a downturn in struggle, those who continue to work for social revolution become marginalised and come to be seen (and to see themselves) as a special separate group of people. It may be that this is only capable of being corrected by a general upsurge in struggle when we won't be weirdos and freaks any more but will seem simply to be stating what is on everybody's minds. However, to work to escalate the struggle it will be necessary to break with the role of activists to whatever extent is possible—to constantly try to push at the boundaries of our limitations and constraints.

Historically, those movements that have come the closest to de-stabilising or removing or going beyond capitalism have not at all taken the form of activism. Activism is essentially a political form and a method of operating suited to liberal reformism that is being pushed beyond its own limits and used for revolutionary purposes. The activist role in itself must be problematic for those who desire social revolution.★

# Postscript

**Many of the articles printed in the *Reflections on June 18th* pamphlet repeated almost to the onset of tedium that capitalism is a social relation and isn't just to do with big banks, corporations or international financial institutions. It's an important point and worth making, but 'Give up Activism' had other fish to fry.**

Therefore the conclusion reached by these other articles was the point of departure for this one—if it is true that capitalism is a social relation based in production and in the relations between classes then what implications does this have for our activity and for our method of attacking it? The basic kernel of the piece and the initial idea that

## Notes

- 1) To my knowledge the article has been translated into French and published in *Je sais tout* (Association des 26-Cantons, 8, rue Lissignol CH-1201 Genève, Suisse) and in *Échanges* No. 93 (BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18, France). It has been translated into Spanish and published in *Ekintra Zuzena* (Ediciones E.Z., Apdo. 235, 48080 Bilbo (Bizkaia), Spanish State). It has been republished in America in *Collective Action Notes* No. 16-17 (CAN, POB 22962, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA) and in the UK in *Organise!* No. 54 (AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, UK). It is also available on-line at: [www.infoshop.org/octo/j18\\_rts1.html#give\\_up](http://www.infoshop.org/octo/j18_rts1.html#give_up) and <http://terra.ucsd.edu/~act/online/j18/reflect1.html#GIVE>. If anyone knows of any other places it has been reproduced or critiqued, I would be grateful to hear of them, via *Do or Die*.
- 2) *Squaring up to the Square Mile: A Rough Guide to the City of London* (J18 Publications (UK), 1999) p.8
- 3) 'Direct Action: Six Years Down the Road' in *Do or Die* No. 7, p.3
- 4) Raoul Vaneigem—*The Revolution of Everyday Life*, (Left Bank Books/Robel Press, 1994)—first published 1967, pp.131-3
- 5) 'The Day they Drove Twyford Down' in *Do or Die* No. 1, p.11
- 6) 'Personality Politics: The Spectacularisation of Fairmile' in *Do or Die* No. 7, p.35
- 7) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.128
- 8) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.107
- 9) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.109
- 10) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.108
- 11) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.109
- 12) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.111
- 13) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.143
- 14) Jacques Camette—'On Organization' (1969) in *This World We Must Leave and Other Essays* (New York, Autonomedia, 1995)
- 15) *Op. Cit.* 4, p.110

inspired the writing of it is the 'Form and Content' section. It had occurred to many people that there was something a little odd about a 'day of action against capitalism'. The original inspiration behind the article was an attempt to pin down what it was that made the idea appear a little odd, incongruous, contradictory.

It seemed there was a similarity between the way we were carrying on acting like liberal activists campaigning against capitalism as if it was another single issue, another 'cause', and Vaneigem's critique of the leftist militant, whose politics consist of a set of duties carried out on behalf of an external 'cause'. It is true that the activist and the militant share this common factor, but it is *about all* they have in common. I made the mistake of carrying over all the other characteristics attributed by Vaneigem to 'the militant' and



assigning them also to the activist, when they largely weren't appropriate. As a result, large sections of 'Give up Activism' come across as far too harsh and as an inaccurate representation of the direct action movement. The Situationists' characteristic bile was perhaps more appropriate when directed at leftist party hacks than as a description of the sort of politics involved around June 18th. The self-sacrifice, the martyrdom and guilt that Vaneigem identified as central to the politics of 'the militant' is much less a feature of direct action politics, which to the contrary is more usually criticised for the opposite failing of lifestyleism.

As has been very neatly drawn out by an excellent critique in the American publication *The Bad Days Will End!*,<sup>1</sup> the original idea that motivated the writing of the article and this rehashing of Vaneigem, translating the critique of the leftist 'militant' into that of the liberal 'activist', are incongruously roped together to produce an article which is an unwieldy amalgam of the objective (What social situation are we in? What forms of action are appropriate?) and the subjective (Why do we feel like activists? Why do we have this mentality? Can we change the way we feel about ourselves?). It is not so much that the subjective aspect of activism is emphasised over the objective, but rather more that the very real problems that are identified with acting as activists come to be seen to be mere products of having this 'activist mentality'. 'Give up Activism' can then be read such that it seems to reverse cause and effect and to imply that if we simply 'give up' this mental role then the objective conditions will change too:

"[Give up Activism's] greatest weakness is this one-sided emphasis on the 'subjective' side of the social phenomenon of activism. The emphasis points to an obvious conclusion implicit throughout [the] argument: If activism is a mental attitude or 'role', it may be changed, as one changes one's mind, or thrown off, like a mask or a costume... The implication is clear: cease to cling, let go of the role, 'give up activism', and a significant impediment to the desired change will be removed."<sup>2</sup>

The article was of course never proposing that we could simply think ourselves out of the problem. It was intended merely to suggest that we might be able to remove an impediment and an illusion about our situation as one step towards challenging that situation, and from that point that we might start to discover a more effective and more appropriate way of acting.

It is now clear that the slipshod hitching of Vaneigem to a enquiry into what it was that was incongruous and odd in having a one-day action against capitalism was an error, prompted by an



over-hasty appropriation of Situationist ideas, without considering how much of a connection there really was between them and the original idea behind the piece. The theory of roles is perhaps the weakest part of Vaneigem's ideas and in his 'Critique of the Situationist International', Gilles Dauvé even goes so far as to say: "Vaneigem was the weakest side of the SI, the one which reveals all its weaknesses".<sup>3</sup> This is probably a little harsh. But nevertheless, the sort of degeneration that Situationist ideas underwent after the post-1968 disintegration of the SI took the worst elements of Vaneigem's "radical subjectivity" as their starting point, in the poorest examples effectively degenerating into bourgeois individualism.<sup>4</sup> That it is this element of Situationist thought that has proven the most easily recuperable should give us pause for thought before too-readily taking it on board.

## Revolution In Your Head

This over-emphasis in 'Give up Activism' on the theory of roles and on the subjective side of things has led some people to fail to recognise the original impetus behind the piece. This starting point and presupposition was perhaps not made clear enough, because some people seem to have assumed that the purpose of the article was to make some kind of point concerning individual psychological health. 'Give up Activism' was not intended to be an article about or an exercise in radical therapy. The main intention of the article, however inexpertly executed, was always to think about our collective activity—what we are doing and how we might do it better.

However, there was a point to the 'subjectivism' of the main part of the article. The reason why 'Give up Activism' was so concerned with our ideas and our mental image of ourselves is not because I thought that if we change our ideas then everything will be alright, but because I had *nothing to say*





about our activity. This was very clearly a critique written from the inside and thus also a self-critique and I am still very much involved in 'activist' politics. As I made plain, I have not necessarily got any clearer idea than anyone else of how to go about developing new forms of action more appropriate to an 'anti-capitalist' perspective. June 18th was a valiant attempt to do just this, and 'Give up Activism' was not a criticism of the action on June 18th as such. I certainly couldn't have come up with anything much better myself.

Although the piece is called 'Give up Activism', I did not want to suggest *at all* that people stop trashing GM crops, smashing up the City and disrupting the gatherings of the rich and powerful, or any of the other myriad acts of resistance that 'activists' engage in. It was more the way we do these things and what we think we are doing when we do them that I was seeking to question. Because 'Give up Activism' had little or nothing to recommend in terms of objective practical activity, the emphasis on the subjective made it seem like I thought these problems existed *only* in our heads.

Of course, thinking of ourselves as activists and as belonging to a community of activists is no more than a recognition of the truth, and there is nothing pathological in that. The problem I was trying to make clear was the *identification* with the activist role—being happy as a radical minority. I intended to question the role, to make people dissatisfied with the role, even while they remained within it. It is only in this way that we stand a chance of escaping it.

Obviously we are constrained within our specific circumstances. During an ebb in the class struggle, revolutionaries are in even more of a minority than they are in any case. We probably don't have any choice about appearing as a strange subculture. But we do have a choice about our attitude to this situation, and if we come to ditch the mental identification with the role then we may discover

that there is actually some room for manoeuvre within our activist role so that we can try and break from activist practice as far as we are able. The point is that challenging the 'subjective' element—our activist self-image—will at least be a step towards moving beyond the role in its 'objective' element also. As I said in 'Give up Activism', only with a general escalation of the class struggle will activists be able to completely ditch their role, but in the meantime: "to work to escalate the struggle it will be necessary to break with the role of activists to whatever extent is possible—to constantly try to push at the boundaries of our limitations and constraints." Which was precisely the point of the article.

For if we cannot even think beyond the role now, then what hope have we of ever escaping it? We should at the very least be dissatisfied with our position as a radical minority and be trying to generalise the struggle and make the necessary upturn happen. Doing away with the activist mentality is necessary but not sufficient for doing away with the role in practice.

## Up the Workers!

Although 'Give up Activism' neglected to recommend any actual change in behaviour outside of saying that we needed one, perhaps now it would be appropriate to say something about this. How can we bring 'politics' out of its separate box, as an external cause to which we dedicate ourselves?

Many of the criticisms of the direct action movement revolve around similar points. Capitalism is based on work; our struggles against it are not based on our work but quite the opposite, they are something we do outside whatever work we may do. Our struggles are not based on our direct needs (as for example, going on strike for higher wages); they seem disconnected, arbitrary. Our 'days of action' and so forth have no connection to any wider on-going struggle in society. We treat capitalism as if it was something external, ignoring our own relation to it. These points are repeated again and again in criticisms of the direct action movement (including 'Give up Activism' but also in many other places).

The problem is not necessarily that people don't understand that capital is a social relation and that it's to do with production as well as just banks and stock exchanges, here as well as in the Third World or that capital is a relation between classes. The point is that even when all of this is understood our attitude to this is still as outsiders looking in, deciding at what point to attack this system. Our struggle against capitalism is not based on *our* relation to value-creation, to work. On the whole the people who make up the direct action movement occupy marginal positions within



society as the unemployed, as students or working in various temporary and transitory jobs. We do not really inhabit the world of production, but exist largely in the realm of consumption and circulation. What unity the direct action movement possesses does not come from all working in the same occupation or living in the same area. It is a unity based on intellectual commitment to a set of ideas.

To a certain extent 'Give up Activism' was being disingenuous (as were many of the other critiques making similar points) in providing all these hints but never spelling out exactly where they led, which left the door open for them to be misunderstood. The author of the critique in *The Bad Days Will End!* was right to point out what the article was indicating but shied away from actually mentioning: the basic thing that's wrong with activism is that it isn't collective mass struggle by the working class at the point of production, which is the way that revolutions are supposed to happen.

The sort of activity that meets the criteria of all the criticisms—that is based on immediate needs, in a mass on going struggle, in direct connection to our everyday lives and that does not treat capital as something external to us, is this working class struggle. It seems a little unfair to criticise the direct action movement for not being something that it cannot be and has never claimed to be, but nevertheless, if we want to move forward we've got to know what we're lacking.

The reason that this sort of working class struggle is the obvious answer to what we are lacking is that this is THE model of revolution that the last hundred years or so has handed down to us that we have to draw upon. However, the shadow of the failure of the workers' movement still hangs over us. And if this is not the model of how a revolution might happen, then what is? And no one has any very convincing answers to that question.

## A Vociferous Minority

So we are stuck with the question—what do we do as a radical minority that wants to create revolution in non-revolutionary times? The way I see it at the moment, we basically have two options. The first is to recognise that as a small scene of radicals we can have relatively little influence on the overall picture and that if and when an upsurge in the class struggle occurs it probably won't have much to do with us. Therefore until the mythical day arrives the best thing we can do is to continue to take radical action, to pursue politics that push things in the right direction and to try and drag along as many other people as possible, but basically to resign ourselves to that fact that we are going to continue to be a minority. So until the point when some sort of upturn in the

class struggle occurs it's basically a holding operation. We can try and stop things getting worse, have a finger in the dam, try and strategically target weak points in the system where we think we can hit and have some effect, develop our theory, live our lives in as radical a way as possible, build a sustainable counter culture that can carry on doing these things in the long term... and hopefully when one day, events out of our control lead to a general radicalisation of society and an upturn in the class struggle we will be there ready to play some part and to contribute what things we have learnt and what skills we have developed as a radical subculture.

The flaw in this sort of approach is that it appears almost like another sort of 'automatic Marxism'—a term used to poke fun at those Marxists who thought that a revolution would happen when the contradictions between the forces and the relations of production had matured sufficiently, when the objective conditions were right, so that revolution almost seemed to be a process that happened without the need for any human involvement and you could just sit back and wait for it to happen. This sort of idea is a flaw carried over into ultra-left thinking. As is explained in *The Bad Days Will End!*, many ultra-left groups have recognised that in periods of downturn, they are necessarily going to be minorities and have argued against compensating for this with any kind of party-building or attempts to substitute their group for the struggle of the proletariat as a whole. Some ultra-left groups have taken this line of thinking to its logical conclusion and have ended up turning doing nothing into a political principle. Of course our response would not be to do nothing, but nevertheless, the point remains that if everyone similarly just waited for an upsurge to happen then it certainly never would. Effectively by just waiting for it to happen we are assuming that someone else will do it for us and maintaining a





division between us and the 'ordinary' workers who will make this happen.

The alternative to this scenario is to stop thinking of the ebb and flow of the class struggle as like some force of nature that just comes and goes without us being able to effect it at all, and to start thinking about how to build class power and how to end the current disorganised and atomised state of workers in this country. The problem is that over the last twenty or so years, the social landscape of the country has changed so fast and so rapidly that it has caught us on the hop. Restructuring and relocation have fractured and divided people. We could try and help re-compose a new unity, instead of just being content with doing our bit and waiting for the upturn, to try and make this upturn happen. We will probably still be acting as activists, but to a lesser extent, and at least we will be making it more possible for us to abolish activism altogether in the future.

One way of doing this is suggested in the critique in *The Bad Days Will End!*:

"Perhaps, then, the first steps towards a genuine anti-activism would be to turn towards these specific, everyday, ongoing struggles. How are the so-called 'ordinary' workers resisting capitalism at this time? What opportunities are *already* there in their ongoing struggles? What networks are *already* being built through their own efforts?"<sup>5</sup>

A current example of exactly this sort of thing is the investigation into call centres initiated by the German group Kolinko, which is mentioned in *The Bad Days Will End!* and was also contributed to in the recent *Undercurrent* No. 8.<sup>6</sup> The idea of this project is that call centres represent the 'new sweatshops' of the information economy and that if a new cycle of workers' resistance is to emerge anywhere then this might just be the place.

It is perhaps also worth considering that changing circumstances might work to our

advantage—the restructuring of the welfare state is forcing more and more activists into work. For example the call centre enquiry project mentioned above could represent a good opportunity for us as call centres are exactly the sort of places where people forced off the dole end up working and exactly the sort of temporary and transient jobs in which those involved in the direct action movement end up working also. This certainly could help make the connection between capitalism and our own immediate needs, and perhaps might allow us to better participate in developing new fronts in the class struggle. Or the increased imposition of work could just end up with us even more fucked over than we are at present, which is obviously what the government are hoping. They are attempting to both have their cake and eat it—trying to turn the clock back and return to days of austerity and privation while gambling that the working class is so atomised and divided by twenty years of attacks that this will not provoke a return of the struggle that originally brought about the introduction of these amelioration measures in the first place. Only time will tell whether they are to be successful in their endeavour or whether we are to be successful in ours.

In conclusion, perhaps the best thing would be to try and adopt both of the above methods. We need to maintain our radicalism and commitment to direct action, not being afraid to take action as a minority. But equally, we can't just resign ourselves to remaining a small radical subculture and treading water while we wait for everyone else to make the revolutionary wave for us. We should also perhaps look at the potential for making our direct action complement whatever practical contribution to current workers' struggles we may feel able to make. In both the possible scenarios outlined above we continue to act more or less within the activist role. But hopefully in both of these different scenarios we would be able to reject the mental identification with the role of activism and actively try to go beyond our status as activists to whatever extent is possible. ★

## Notes

- 1) 'The Necessity and Impossibility of Anti-Activism', *The Bad Days Will End!*, No. 3, p.4. I highly recommend this article, and the magazine contains some other good stuff too. Send \$3 to: Merrymount Publications, PO Box 441597, Somerville, MA 02144, USA. Email: [bronte@earthlink.net](mailto:bronte@earthlink.net) Web: [www.geocities.com/jellatadt/index.htm](http://www.geocities.com/jellatadt/index.htm)
- 2) *The Bad Days Will End!*, p.5
- 3) Gilles Dauvé (Jean Barrot)—'Critique of the Situationist International' in *What is Situationism?—A Reader*, Ed. Stewart Home (AK Press, 1996), p.35
- 4) See 'Whatever happened to the Situationists?', *Aufheben* No. 6, p.45
- 5) *The Bad Days Will End!*, p.6
- 6) The Kolinko proposal was recently published in *Collective Action Notes* No. 16/17 and is also available on the web at: [www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/index\\_e.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/index_e.htm)





# Rebelling Against our Domestication: Towards a Feral Revolution!



*Originally published in Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed Issue No.19, May/June 1989.*

**When I was a very young child, my life was filled with intense pleasure and a vital energy that caused me to feel what I experienced to the full. I was the centre of this marvellous, playful existence and felt no need to rely on anything but my own living experience to fulfill me. I felt intensely, I experienced intensely, my life was a festival of passion and pleasure. My disappointments and sorrows were also intense. I was born a free, wild being in the midst of a society based upon domestication.**

There was no way that I could escape being domesticated myself. Civilisation will not tolerate what is wild in its midst. But I never forgot the intensity that life could be. I never forgot the vital energy that has surged through me. My existence since I first began to notice that this vitality was being drained away has been a warfare between the needs of civilised survival and the need to break loose and experience the full intensity of life unbound.

I want to experience this vital energy again. I want to know the free-spirited wildness of my unrepressed desires realising themselves in festive play. I want to smash down every wall that stands between me and the intense, passionate life of untamed freedom that I want. The sum of these walls is everything we call civilisation, everything that comes between us and the direct, participatory experience of the wild world. Around us has grown a web of domination, a web of mediation that limits our experience, defining the boundaries of acceptable production and consumption. Domesticating authority takes many

forms, some of which are difficult to recognise. Government, capital and religion are some of the more obvious faces of authority. But technology, work, language with its conceptual limits, the ingrained habits of etiquette and propriety—these too are domesticating authorities which transform us from wild, playful, unruly animals into tamed, bored, unhappy producers and consumers. These things work in us insidiously, limiting our imaginations, usurping our desires, suppressing our lived experience. And it is the world created by these authorities, the civilised world, in which we live. If my dream of a life filled with intense pleasure and wild adventure is to be realised, the world must be radically transformed, civilisation must fall before expanding wilderness, authority must fall before the energy of our wild freedom. There must be—for want of a better word—a revolution.

But a revolution that can break down civilisation and restore the vital energy of untamed desire cannot be like any revolution of the past. All revolutions to date have centred around power, its



use and redistribution. They have not sought to eradicate the social institutions that domesticate; at best they have only sought to eradicate the power relationships within those institutions. So revolutionaries of the past have aimed their attacks at the centre of power seeking to overthrow it. Focused on power, they were blind to the insidious forces of domination that encompass our daily existence—and so, when successful at overthrowing the powers that be, they ended up re-creating them. To avoid this, we need to focus not on power, but on our desire to go wild, to experience life to the full, to know intense pleasure and wild adventure. As we attempt to realise this desire, we confront the real forces of domination, the forces that we face every moment of every day. These forces have no single centre that can be overthrown. They are a web that binds us. So rather than trying to overthrow the powers that be, we want to undermine domination as we confront it everyday, helping the already collapsing civilisation to break down more quickly—and as it falls, the centres of power will fall with it. Previous revolutionaries have only explored the well-mapped territories of power. I want to explore and adventure in the unmapped, and mappable, territories of wild freedom. The revolution that can create the world I want has to be a feral revolution.

There can be no programs or organisations for feral revolution, because wildness cannot spring from a program or organisation. Wildness springs from the freeing of our instincts and desires, from the spontaneous expression of our passions. Each of us has experienced the processes of domestication, and this experience can give us the knowledge we need to undermine civilisation and transform our lives. Our distrust of our own experience is probably what keeps us from rebelling as freely and as actively as we'd like. We're afraid of fucking up, we're afraid of our own ignorance. But this distrust and fear have been instilled in us by authority. It keeps us from really growing and learning. It makes us easy targets for any authority that is ready to fill us. To set up 'revolutionary' programs is to play on this fear and distrust, to reinforce the need to be told what to do. No attempt to go feral can be successful when based on such programs. We need to learn to trust and act upon our own feelings and experiences, if we are ever to be free.

So I offer no programs. What I will share is some thoughts on ways to explore. Since we have all have been domesticated, part of the revolutionary process is a process of personal transformation. We have been conditioned not to trust ourselves, not to feel completely, not to experience life intensely. We have been conditioned to accept the humiliation of work and pay as inescapable, to relate to things as resources to be

used, to feel the need to prove ourselves by producing. We have been conditioned to expect disappointment, to see it as normal, not to question it. We have been conditioned to accept the tedium of civilised survival rather than breaking free and really living. We need to explore ways of breaking down this conditioning, of getting as free of our domestication as we can now. Let's try to get so free of this conditioning that it ceases to control us and becomes nothing more than a role we use when necessary for survival in the midst of civilisation as we strive to undermine it.

In a very general way, we know what we want. We want to live as wild, free beings in a world of wild, free beings. The humiliation of having to follow rules, of having to sell our lives away to buy survival, of seeing our usurped desires transformed into abstractions and images in order to sell us commodities fills us with rage. How long will we put up with this misery? We want to make this world into a place where our desires can be immediately realised, not just sporadically, but normally. We want to re-eroticise our lives. We want to live not in a dead world of resources, but in a living world of free wild lovers. We need to start exploring the extent to which we are capable of living these dreams in the present without isolating ourselves. This will give us a clearer understanding of the domination of civilisation over our lives, an understanding which will allow us to fight domestication more intensely and so expand the extent to which we can live wildly.

Attempting to live as wildly as possible now will also help break down our social conditioning. This will spark a wild prankishness in us which will take aim at all that would tame it, undermining civilisation and creating new ways of living and sharing with each other. These explorations will expose the limits of civilisation's domination and will show its inherent opposition to freedom. We will discover possibilities we have never before imagined—vast expanses of wild freedom. Projects, ranging from sabotage and pranks that expose or undermine the dominant society, to the expansion of wilderness, to festivals and orgies and general free sharing, can point to amazing possibilities.

Feral revolution is an adventure. It is the daring exploration of going wild. It takes us into unknown territories for which no maps exist. We can only come to know these territories if we dare to explore them actively. We must dare to destroy whatever destroys our wildness and to act on our instincts and desires. We must dare to trust in ourselves, our experiences and our passions. Then we will not let ourselves be chained or penned in. We will not allow ourselves to be tamed. Our feral energy will rip civilisation to shreds and create a life of wild freedom and intense pleasure.★



# The Lowdown on Lockdown

## Striking Back Against the Prison State

### "WELCOME TO THE CLAMPDOWN...

Constant CCTV surveillance, more police weapons, zero tolerance, dissidents facing terrorist treatment, the new top cop at the Met comes to us direct from Special Branch. Every year they bring out more laws—to outlaw more protests, pleasures and survival or to make the punishments more severe. Every year the police have more weapons and power. Every year the state extends its controlling tentacles into more areas of life. And every year they build more prisons..."

This was the opening paragraph to the leaflet that launched the CAGE network. CAGE was born out of discussions at the UK Earth First! Summer Gathering in Suffolk in August 1999. In the aftermath of June 18th, with the new Prevention of Terrorism legislation looming and increasing evidence of State clampdown in almost all areas of personal and political life, people were scared. The idea behind CAGE was to find a way for Earth First! and the wider community to take back the initiative and tackle this fear by doing what we do best and taking direct action, this time against the growing mechanisms of state coercion.

Many of the examples of growing repression that we discussed were in the form of new legislation, such as the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (now Act), and the attempted erosion of the right to trial by jury. Resistance to these involves lobbying Parliament and attempting to prevent things becoming law, and experience shows we're not good at that. What was needed was something that offered potential for effective grassroots action. The area that became the obvious target was the prison system.

In the UK more people are being sent to prison every year and sentences are getting longer.<sup>1</sup> The UK prison population (the average amount of people in prison at any one time) has been rising since 1993, when it was 45,000.<sup>2</sup> It is currently around 65,000.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, a massive prison building programme is underway.



Increasingly prisons are being built and run for profit by private companies. There are currently 3 private prisons under construction, with 3 more planned, as well as extensions to existing prisons. The government's own estimates suggest that with the introduction of new draconian legislation (notably the Crime and Disorder Bill 1998 and the Crime (Sentences) Bill 1997), the prison population will rise to up to 80,000 by 2007.<sup>4</sup> To accommodate this the Prison Service aims to have 3 sites, with full planning permission, at all times.<sup>5</sup>

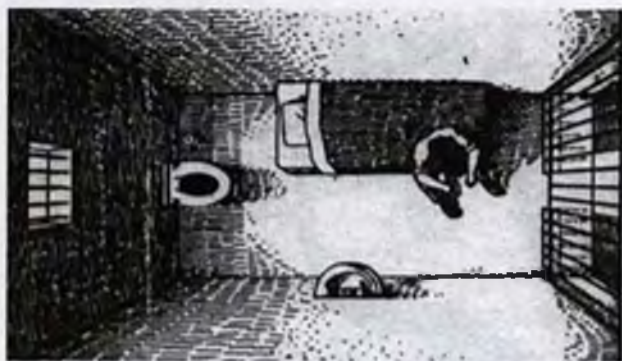
This is a scary prospect, but it also offers a way of resisting the clampdown. Prison construction sites are more susceptible to direct action than policy decisions; private companies, operating for profits, are more vulnerable to economic sabotage than the government; and direct action and economic sabotage are what we do best.

This article takes a look back at the year that has passed since that first meeting: what CAGE has done, how effective it has been, and where we might go in the future. It is based on the thoughts and experience of just one person, and does not represent the network as a whole (that would be impossible) or any of the other individuals in it.

### A Year of Action

In the past year CAGE has touched on several issues, including police militarisation, UK arms fairs and mental health detention, but most of the actions have been focused on either resistance to prison building or fighting immigration detention.





Immigration detention is the most horrendous abuse of life and liberty in the UK. Refugees are imprisoned without charge, trial, time limit or proper reason given. Most are political asylum seekers fleeing danger, torture and death threats. Many speak no English and are very afraid. Across Europe countries are closing borders and clamping down on refugees. Far Right and neo-Nazi groups in places like Dover are cashing in on the atmosphere of racial hatred. At any one time there are over 1,000 people detained in the UK under the 1971 Immigration Act.<sup>6</sup> Thousands pass through the system every year and it is getting worse. The most recent Asylum and Immigration Act includes proposals to increase the capacity for immigration detention by up to four times.<sup>7</sup>

Run by the Immigration Service, rather than the Prison Service, these detention centres are technically separate from the prison system, but from our point of view they are very much part of the same system. Locking people up and keeping them under guard is prison. Immigration Detention Centres (IDC) are run for profit by the same companies that are running the new private prisons, and immigration detainees are also held in HM Prisons—an entire wing of HMP Rochester is devoted to refugees.<sup>8</sup>

The first ever CAGE action took place at Campsfield House IDC on November 27th 1999. At the time it was the largest refugee prison in the UK, with up to 200 inmates. The flagship of the immigration detention complex it was opened in November 1993, and is run by Group 4 security.

On the last Saturday of every month there is a demonstration outside the centre. Many of the people locked inside Campsfield have seen nothing of the UK but airports, cells and Group 4 vans. They are held behind a twenty-foot high razor-wire topped fence. Throughout the centre there are surveillance cameras. Friends and relatives wishing to visit are searched before passing through five secure doors. Campsfield operates as a high security prison. Inmates are constantly told they are not welcome, that people in the UK don't want them. Many are so worn down that they accept voluntary deportation. To hear people on the outside on their side makes a real difference.

For the sixth anniversary of the centre's opening, CAGE decided to join up with the Close Campsfield Campaign's monthly demonstration.<sup>9</sup> Over 200 people showed up with helium balloons, paper aeroplanes, music, spanners and bolt cutters. CAGE had made two hundred multi-coloured masks in the shape of butterflies, to encourage people to mask up, which was good, as the police were prepared and present in large numbers. Each panel of the fence had been numbered for evidence gathering and some people were stopped and searched as they entered the area. Nonetheless, because of the layout of the site (a very narrow path at the edge of the fence that was easy to block police from seeing) and the large number of people (about half of the 200) who came in sorted affinity groups, we made our presence known to the inmates and some damage was caused.

That was the start of a good year and CAGE seems to have created a real buzz of excitement.

On Friday 14th July 2000 around 100 people occupied a piece of land in Ashford, Surrey, where the government wants to build yet another women's prison. The action was timed to coincide with Bastille Day (the celebration of the storming of the state prison in the French revolution of 1789). Tripods, tents and marquees were set up and we settled in for a weekend of action and discussion and information sharing about prison expansion and how to stop it.

On the Saturday over sixty people left the Bastille Day site to visit Harmondsworth Immigration Detention Centre, near Heathrow. They joined the Close Harmondsworth Campaign's picket, climbed onto the top of the fence surrounding the centre and spoke to the refugees inside, ignoring police pleas to come down and stop damaging the fence.

The next day 8 people armed with phonecards, propaganda and cherries, entered Harmondsworth to meet the people they had spoken to over the fence.

One refugee they met, Salim Rambo, had been caught up in the civil war in Zaire and now fears for his life if he returns home. Salim had lived in London for nine months waiting for his case to be heard. He was taken to Harmondsworth by policemen who jumped him after he responded to an invitation to an Immigration service interview. He had not seen a solicitor or had his case listened to. He was due to be deported on Tuesday to Germany. They had already refused his asylum application, so from there he would be sent straight to Zaire and possible death.

All day Monday was spent trying to get his deportation delayed. Phonecalls to solicitors, MPs and the Immigration Service established that he did have a legal case to delay his flight, but the



Immigration Service were not interested, and his flight was leaving at 7.15am the next day...

Early Tuesday morning four people from CAGE leafleted passengers about to board Flight BA 902, taking Rambo to Germany. At 8.00am a CAGE activist, who had purchased a ticket, stood up and refused to let the flight depart while Rambo was still on it. The flight was delayed for two hours and the pilot insisted that Rambo be removed. Immigration officials threatened him with a beating, but he would not get on another plane and is still in the UK (now held in Haslar Detention Centre near Portsmouth).

Within hours of this action at Heathrow Airport, people had contacted the group for information on how it was done. Just three days later at Gatwick the deportation of Amanj Gafor, an asylum seeker from Iraqi Kurdistan, was stopped in the same way.

British Airways and its shareholders profit from an average 5,000 deportations a month. They don't care about the lives they endanger, but they do care about their image and don't like being disturbed by actions and protests. Missing a take-off slot also means a £10,000 fine, and similar actions in Belgium forced commercial airlines to stop deporting asylum seekers, so keep it up!

### **Donate your air miles—save a life!**

These anti-deportation actions are expensive—depending on the destination, getting tickets to stop a flight leaving can cost hundreds of pounds. Do you ever buy petrol? Do you shop in major supermarkets? (well, shame on you!) But if you do... Collect the air miles you get on those silly reward card things and donate them to us to help subsidise these actions, stop deportations, hit airline profits hard, and save lives!

Send them to: CAGE, c/o 182 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW, UK.

The spontaneous build-up of events over the Bastille Day weekend that led up to the airport action was completely unexpected, as was the buzz around the site in Ashford about resisting the prison building. From the beginning the response from local people was amazing. They don't want the prison. As soon as we arrived, people were bringing food and trying to persuade us to stay for good! Even train drivers passing the site honked their approval! Leaflets were taken door to door inviting people to come to the site, where they were shown plans of the proposed prison and information about CAGE, direct action, prison privatisation and immigration detention.

We had to leave on Monday, but people are already discussing follow-up actions. Ideas include targeting any company that dares to bid for the

contract and even setting up a permanent site to stop construction altogether.

We have also received news of covert sabotage at Campsfield House and to a prison service building site near Bristol, and we have reason to believe that the Home Office are taking the threat of a direct action campaign against private prisons very seriously indeed. With both the treatment of asylum seekers and prison privatisation, many people have expressed the feeling that these are issues whose time has come.

As well as organising actions, a lot of time and effort has been put into researching the issues and spreading information about why we should resist prison building and how it might be done. There is now a website with information about the CAGE network and the UK prison building programme, and it has links to a wide range of relevant groups and resources. We also have information about the companies and consortiums that are currently running Britain's private prisons and bidding for the upcoming contracts. A map has been put together of prison building sites, company headquarters and offices and immigration prisons. A list is being compiled of companies exploiting prison labour in the UK.

### **Unanswered Questions**

Early CAGE network meetings skirted round a lot of issues. The name CAGE, for example, doesn't actually stand for anything: It is a working title that never got changed. People wanted to get to the heart of what CAGE was felt to be about—taking action and inspiring others to take action. This headlong rush to action was brilliant in many ways. CAGE went from not existing at all to being a group that was taken surprisingly seriously, in a matter of months. Taking action is the most powerful way to prove that something is possible.

For example, on 30th May 2000, the construction site of HMP Rye Hill (near Rugby) was occupied and brought to a standstill for an afternoon by around 30 people. This was the first action targeting prison building. HMP Rye Hill is one of three prisons under construction, and is now almost finished. It is being built by our old favourites Carillion (formerly the construction side of Tarmac Plc) and Group 4.

The action was very simple; a crane-sit with banner drop, climbing on machinery to stop work and occupying the site offices. The police arrived late and everyone got away. It was significant, because it showed that it could be done. Tackling the prison system head-on is a daunting prospect. What the Rye Hill action showed was that action against prison building is not very different from action against roads—it's about stopping the same processes, in similar ways. We're even up against some of the same corporations.



By moving so quickly into direct action however, a lot of things were glossed over and some important questions remained unanswered. The most important of these was defining exactly what was the CAGE network? How is it new? How should it fit in with the many political organisations that have been working around prisons and prisoners for decades? How should it be structured? What should it actually do?

When CAGE was being set up there was always a danger of re-inventing the wheel. Why start an entirely new group when scores of them already exist? The Anarchist Black Cross (although now folded), the Anarchist Federation, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, Southall Black Sisters and countless miscarriage of justice, prisoner support and asylum seeker justice campaigns have spent years dealing with issues we are just starting to look at. The work CAGE is trying to do can hopefully provide a fresh perspective and some fresh energy.

CAGE place resistance to prisons firmly in the context of anti-capitalism and resistance to economic globalisation. As Lorenzo Ervin puts it, "The Prison-Industrial Complex, as some activists call it is really a 'new' form of slavery with a 'twist.'"<sup>10</sup> A pattern has been observed in the US; workers, earning say \$8.00 per hour, are losing their jobs as corporations take advantage of the "free market" and relocate to (for example) Thailand, where workers can be paid as little as \$2.00 per day. Unemployed and alienated from society the American worker turns to some outlawed means of survival. They are then arrested, put in prison and made to work for as little as 22 cents per hour.<sup>11</sup>

Cheap prison labour is actually bringing some American companies back from the global South. For example, DPAS, a San Francisco-based company, closed one of its exploitative factories in Mexico and relocated its data-processing work to California's San Quentin State Prison because it saved them money.<sup>12</sup> In a statement supporting prison labour, Representative Bill McCollum, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee said that; "by authorising a wage rate for prison workers of less than minimum wage when the goods or services to be sold would otherwise be produced offshore, we will provide those companies with a means to stay competitive."<sup>13</sup>

The examples quoted here are from the US and it is certainly in America that the rot runs the deepest. There are two million people<sup>14</sup> behind bars there—twenty five percent of the world's prison population (although the US makes up only five percent of the world's population).<sup>15</sup>

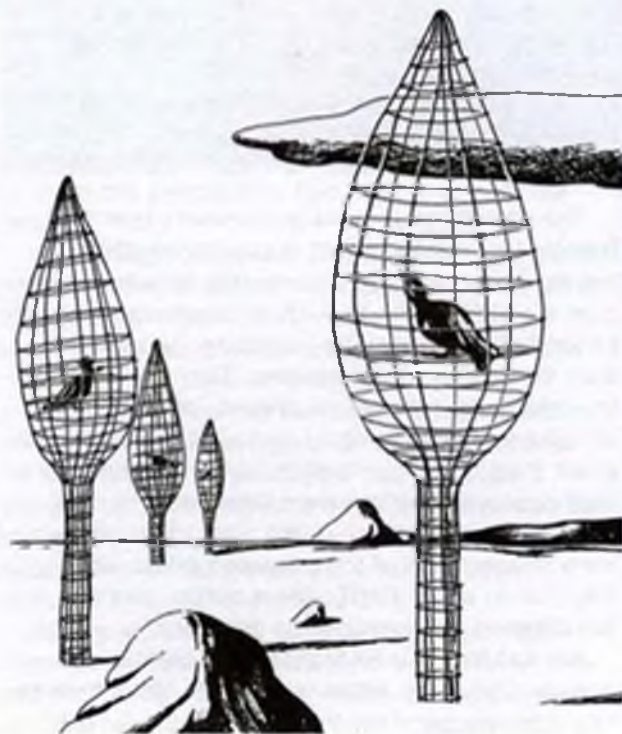
However in today's climate of globalisation, the lessons from the US must be learned fast. As part of a global trend towards privatising the functions

of the state, multinational companies are taking over the expanding prison system in the UK. Under New Labour's Private Finance Initiative (PFI), a company fronts the money, builds the prison, runs it for 25 years and gets paid back by the government at a fixed rate per inmate per day. Because in the short term the cost of the prison is borne by private funds, this allows the government to build many more prisons than under the old system, and lock more people up.

The system is imported from America, and many of the same companies are involved. US private prisons hold people longer than state prisons would, fund right wing 'law and order' politicians and lobby the government for harsher sentences.<sup>16</sup> They are paid per inmate per day, so the more people that are locked up the more money they make.

The UK is leading the way in Europe in introducing a free market in human misery. Alongside the US and Australia, our government are the pioneers of prison privatisation.<sup>17</sup> The UK prison population is in fact expanding at a faster rate than that in the US.<sup>18</sup> The British government even awards contracts to Wackenhut, a company that many American states won't touch because of their record of malpractice, cost cutting, criminal indictments, riots and deaths.<sup>19</sup>

The strength of Earth First!-style direct action lies in strategic, creative and lateral thinking—standing back, viewing the whole operation, identifying a weak point, and going for it mercilessly. The perennial spanner in the works—using the element of surprise and doing the





unexpected. In the case of prisons this has meant looking beyond the prisons themselves, with their daunting razor-wire topped walls, to the management consortiums, investors, companies exploiting prisoners as slave labour, and the relatively undefended construction sites and corporate headquarters on which the industry depends. All of these could be weak links in the chain.

CAGE has its roots in ecological direct action and the 'new wave' of anti-capitalist protests. This has had a profound influence on its nature and ideas. From Earth First! CAGE inherited the principles of non-hierarchical organisation and of attempting to directly address the problem in hand without relying on, or seeking approval from, politicians, bureaucrats or other bosses. From the beginning CAGE adopted a radical, no compromise stance of complete rejection of the prison system and avoided reformist arguments about improving prison conditions in favour of out-and-out resistance.

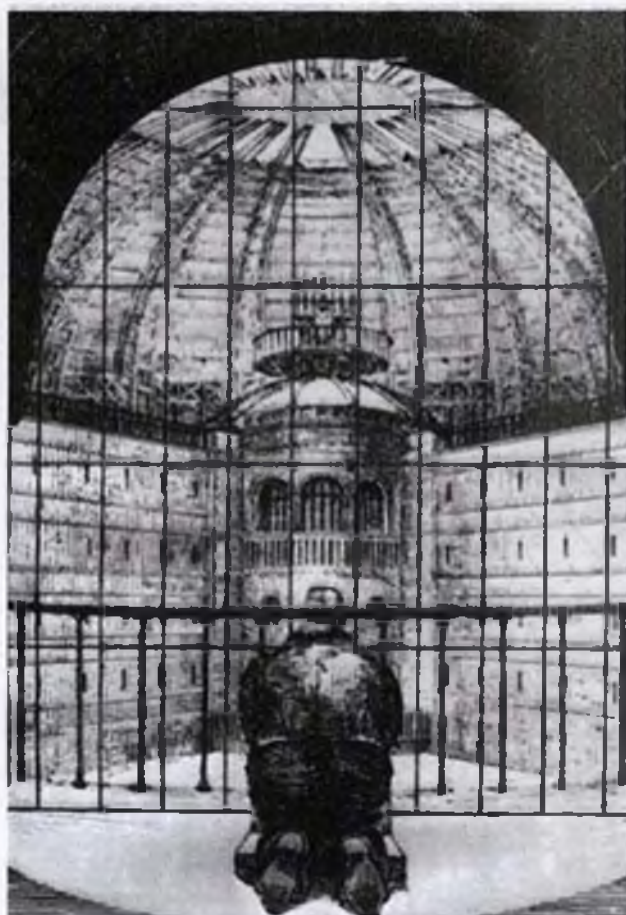
Many of the other groups mentioned above focus their work around prisons or prisoner support campaigns and individual miscarriage of justice cases. This is extremely valuable work and it takes up a lot of time and energy. Early CAGE meetings made the decision to avoid getting tied up in campaigning for individual cases. The idea was to maintain a focus on the system as a whole and how individual cases and issues fitted into it. That way it would be possible to work with a wide range of groups without getting tied to any single campaign.

It looks good on paper, but, despite calling ourselves a network, CAGE has so far been a small number of people dotted about the country, getting together in centralised meetings to plan actions. Looking forward, if we want to become more than just EFI working under a different name, on a slightly different issue, we are going to have to work hard and resolve these problems.

## Out of the Ghetto?

Legislation like the Terrorism Act is explicitly directed at political activists, and the UK direct action community does seem to have been feeling the heat a bit more since the success of June 18th. It would be blind and arrogant though, to believe that "the clampdown" talked about in that first CAGE flyer was just about us.

Around 44% of men and 15% of women are convicted of a criminal offence at some time in their lives. Most are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Of men in prison 79.4% reported having no qualifications, 72% left school before reaching 16, and of women surveyed, 61% were mothers before going to jail, with an average of three children under the age of sixteen and 49% had experienced sexual abuse.<sup>20</sup>



More significantly, research shows that if you are black you are more likely to be stopped and searched; more likely to be arrested; more likely to be remanded in custody; and more likely to receive longer custodial sentences if found guilty. In 1997 up to 18% of men and 25% of women in prison were from a minority group. Though black people make up only 1.7% of the general population over 10 years of age, 10% of male and 13% of female prisoners were black.<sup>21</sup> Yet there is no evidence to show that black people commit more crimes than white people do.

The focus of CAGE on fighting prison expansion therefore provides an exciting opportunity to form links with some of the groups and communities that simply don't see ecological issues as relevant to them. One black American writer summed it up perfectly when he wrote:

"April's demonstrations in Washington and the ruckus in Seattle last November announced the arrival of a new spirit of political activism. But one question must be asked: Where is the color in this new movement? The monochromatic complexion of the activists sparks the same concern it did 35 years ago. In both Seattle and Washington, observers noted the relative absence of African-Americans from the mix of protesters.

...The prison-industrial complex, where the scavenger logic of globalism is most crudely expressed, could be aligned with the overall battle





*Scaling the fences at Harmondsworth Immigration Detention Centre on Bastille Day.*

against corporate power. As Manning Marable has written, "There is an inescapable connection between Seattle and Sing Sing Prison, between global inequality... and what's happening to black, brown and working people here in the United States." Although the connection is plain, it has failed to produce an organisation capable of attracting both blacks energized by recent struggles against police brutality and whites newly lured to the fight for global justice."<sup>22</sup>

For me the most interesting opportunity that CAGE offers the EF! network as a whole is that, through turning our attention to prison and immigration issues, we may prove able to break out of the 'white activist ghetto'. It has not, however, proved easy. Building links was one of the main aims behind the Bastille Day land occupation. The idea was to bring together a wide range of political groups already involved in campaigning around prisons and related issues; to talk about direct action, the experiences of Earth First!, and how they might be applied to anti-prison campaigning. These discussions were to take place in a space we had occupied and taken from the Home Office, to give people a sense of possibility and power—after all, nothing inspires like success.

Unfortunately, this was the least successful aspect of Bastille Day. Despite considerable effort put into networking the action and numerous groups saying in advance that they would come, when it came to it, around one hundred of "the usual activist suspects" turned out to take part. This is perhaps because of the anti-social meet up time (9.00am on a Friday), but the occupation continued all weekend and very few of the groups we had hoped to see arrived.

Nonetheless, there have been more successful links made with groups to discuss the potential for working together. Unsurprisingly, this has mainly been achieved by going along to their meetings and

events, to find out what issues they are interested in and where we can find common ground. This is easiest done at a local level and it has proved difficult to achieve with the CAGE network structured as it is (a few people working hard to produce big national actions). The question of how to structure the (definitely growing) CAGE network, which was glossed over in the beginning, is therefore an important one, and I believe can no longer be ignored.

Which is not supposed to sound too negative. What has been achieved in so short a time is impressive and what might be achieved in the future even more so. Direct action against prisons is sexy and exciting. From the storming of the Bastille to the unreported escapes, because prisons are one of the ultimate symbols of state power, there is huge revolutionary potential in taking them on.★

**For more details contact: CAGE, c/o 182 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW, UK.**

**Telephone: 07931 401 962**

**Email: [prison@narchy.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:prison@narchy.fsnet.co.uk)**

**Web: [www.veggies.org.uk/cage](http://www.veggies.org.uk/cage)**

## Notes

- 1) Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts for 1997/98.
- 2) Home Office Projections of Long Term Trends in Prison Population to 2007.
- 3) Prison service website: <http://hmp.prisonservice.gov.uk/statistics>
- 4) Home Office Projections of Long Term Trends in Prison Population to 2007.
- 5) See: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/pid/inv992ki.htm> for more information.
- 6) Home Office figures for detention, February 2000, showed 977, before the opening of Oakington in March 2000. Statistics from Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate.
- 7) Campsfield Monitor Issue No.15, September 2000. Published by the Close Campsfield Campaign.
- 8) Home Office figures for detention in February 2000 show 183 people detained in E-wing of Rochester Prison. Statistics from Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate.
- 9) See: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~asylum> for more information.
- 10) Lorenzo Kombo Ervin, Prison: The New Slavery? Posted at: [a.info@tso.ca](mailto:a.info@tso.ca)
- 11) Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans, *The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global Economy* (Agit Press, 1998).
- 12) Prisons and Global Economics or Why they'd rather send you to Prison than to School, at: [www.a16.org/resources/#fivers](http://www.a16.org/resources/#fivers)
- 13) Prisons and Global Economics: [www.a16.org/resources/#fivers](http://www.a16.org/resources/#fivers)
- 14) Statistics from the US Department of Justice show at least 1,972,664 behind bars and around 4.5 million on parole or probation. See: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov)
- 15) Prisons and Global Economics: [www.a16.org/resources/#fivers](http://www.a16.org/resources/#fivers)
- 16) See: <http://www.newunlimited.co.uk/archive/article10.4273.38504000.00.html>
- 17) Snapshots of prison privatization: *The Planet*, Dark Night Field Notes, No.11, p.44.
- 18) Sir David Ramsbotham, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, lecture to Elliott School, January 2000.
- 19) Gregory Palast 'Free Market in Human Misery' in *The Observer* 26th September 1999.
- 20) Sir David Ramsbotham, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, lecture to Elliott School, January 2000.
- 21) Facts and statistics taken from *Let's Get it Right—Race and Justice 2000* published by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) pp.13-14.
- 22) Salim Muwakkil, *A Common Enemy*, from BRC-news at: [www.blackradicalcongress.org](http://www.blackradicalcongress.org)



# The Indomitable Gaul!

The daring and audacious publicity-hungry bank robber and kidnapper Jacques Mesrine has to be one of the all-time greatest prison escapees. In the 60s and 70s he became a folk hero in his native France, known as 'the Robin Hood of the Paris streets' for his daredevil raids and for the inability of the entire French police force to catch or hold on to him. He kidnapped and robbed the rich and powerful and even gave away some of the wealth he stole to the homeless.

Mesrine was good looking and charming, with a string of glamorous girlfriends. He was always gentlemanly, courteous and kind, even to those he was robbing or kidnapping. He liked high living, good food and wine, the best restaurants and the best clothes—often robbing banks dressed in the latest fashions. He enjoyed risk and danger but combined this with a passion for meticulous planning and military precision. He was a master of disguise, often wearing two or three wigs on top of one another for swift changes of appearance. Mesrine was constantly protesting over prison conditions and exploiting his notoriety to highlight the issue. And he put this personal hatred of incarceration into practice by escaping from prison in both France and Canada no less than four times, including both the highest security prisons in France and Canada.

On the 17th August 1969, Mesrine and his girlfriend Jeanne Schneider both escaped from Percé prison in Quebec, Canada. They were inside for attempting to kidnap Canadian grocery and textile millionaire Georges Deslauriers after he sacked them both as domestic servants.

Mesrine knew he had to escape from this little local prison before he was transferred to a bigger one. He ripped the handle off an aluminium mug and sharpened it by rubbing it against the cement wall of his cell. Using this as a weapon he captured a prison warder, stealing his keys and locking him in the cell. Jeanne had done the same thing with the warder of the women's wing, and stopping only to raid the kitchens and fill a bag with food, they fled into the woods surrounding the prison.

He was quickly recaptured by the Canadian authorities and sentenced to a total of eleven years in the 'escape-proof' maximum security wing



of the Saint Vincent de Paul prison in Laval, outside Montreal. The prison was brand new and supposed to be the most secure prison in the country. But on the 21st August 1972, Mesrine led five others in an escape.

The plan was outrageously simple. While having their morning exercise in the prison yard, they used a pair of pliers stolen from the metal workshop to cut through the three fences surrounding the exercise yard, crawling along the ground between each of the fences. The escapees then stopped two motorists on the nearest highway, commandeering their cars and then later dumping them.

However, feeling that it was unfair that he should be free while others remained incarcerated, Mesrine decided to return to the prison and free the remaining 56 prisoners in the maximum security wing. He immediately started robbing banks to raise the money he would need for the escape plan and a mere two weeks after he had escaped he returned to break out the others.





Along with some friends, he had rented several flats in Montreal under false names, stocking them with enough food for several men to be able to hide there. He had also got enough guns for there to be one weapon between every two escapees. At 2.30 in the afternoon on the 3rd September, Mesrine and his friend Jean-Paul Mercier drove up to the prison armed with sawn-off shotguns. They planned to throw pairs of wire-cutting shears and the guns over two wire fences into the exercise yard. They also had another two get-away cars with drivers parked at intervals up the road.

The escape attempt never worked out. As they drove up to the prison they discovered that since their escape two weeks earlier security had been tightened and there were now cops and armed prison guards everywhere. After a shoot-out with the cops and prison guards Mesrine and Mercier had to make a swift getaway and abandon their break-out plan.

Back in France in 1973, living on the run, Mesrine was aware that eventually he would be caught, so he arranged his escape from prison in advance. He knew when he was captured he would be tried first at the Palais de Justice in Compiègne, on the outskirts of Paris. So he explored the building and drove around the surrounding area, drawing a map. He arranged an escape plan with his friends, showing them where to park the get-away car and demonstrating the quickest route out of town. He also took them into the Palais de Justice and showed them where guns could be hidden.

On the 8th March 1973 Mesrine was eventually caught by the French police. As he was being driven to prison in an armoured van, he turned to one of the cops escorting him and said: "What do you bet me I'll be out in three months?" The cop smiled; he knew Mesrine was being taken to the highest security jail in France—the La Santé in Paris, from which no one had ever escaped.

On the 6th June, Mesrine was taken for trial at the Palais de Justice in Compiègne. All day he had been complaining of dysentery and demanding to go to the lavatory at regular intervals. While being transferred from one vehicle to another, he saw his accomplice who threw his cigarette to the ground: the agreed signal that everything was ready to go ahead as planned. At the court house he again demanded to go to the toilet. When there was no

paper in the toilets for the use of defendants he was allowed to use the lawyers' lavatories. Which of course was where the gun was hidden behind a cistern. Stuffing the gun under his belt, he returned to the trial. As he went up before the bench to answer the charges made against him, he sprang forwards and grabbed the judge, holding him at gunpoint and then using him as a human shield to manoeuvre his way out of the court. He then ran through a hail of gunfire for the get-away car that was waiting and sped off along minor roads by his pre-arranged get-away route. Twenty miles away they stole a new car and dumped the old one, making for a pre-arranged hide-out where Mesrine cracked open a bottle of champagne to celebrate: he had kept his promise and escaped within three months.

On the 28th September the police had him again; an accomplice arrested during a bank robbery had grassed him up to reduce his own sentence. Although his re-capture was a disaster for Mesrine, he typically made the best of a bad job by negotiating with the cops sent to arrest him and using the time this bought to burn all his papers, arrange his arsenal of guns and ammunition neatly on the bed, wash, dress, shave and tidy his flat, so that when he finally flung open the door, immaculately dressed and puffing on a big cigar, he was able to welcome his arch-enemy Commissaire Broussard with a glass of champagne, offering him his congratulations on having "won this round".

Mesrine knew he was either facing the guillotine or life in prison. He was sent back to La Santé where he tried unsuccessfully to get himself sent to court quickly in order to escape from the courthouse. Instead he ended up awaiting trial in jail for the whole of 1974 and 1975.

From inside La Santé in Paris, Mesrine was secretly communicating with his old accomplice Jean-Paul Mercier, back in the Saint Vincent de Paul prison near Montreal, figuring out plans for him to escape jail, rob banks, get a load of money, come to France and spring Mesrine from jail. Mercier and 4 others escaped again from Saint Vincent de Paul on 22nd October 1974 but Mercier was killed in a shoot-out with the police while robbing a bank in Montreal a mere eight days after the escape.

While awaiting trial in jail, as well as frequently writing to the press protesting over prison



conditions and giving an extensive interview to *Paris Match*, Mesrine also wrote a wildly exaggerated autobiography called *L'Instinct de Mort* (*The Killing Instinct*) in which he boasted of large numbers of murders he had never committed. The book was smuggled out of prison and published three months before his case finally came to trial in May 1977. After a typically show-stopping and totally unrepentant performance in court he was eventually sentenced to what under the circumstances must be regarded as a very lenient 20 year stretch.

In the letters he wrote to friends from prison Mesrine talked openly of escaping. So the prison authorities at La Santé, already the highest security prison in France, built a special new maximum security wing to put him in. And then on 3rd May 1978, the governor of the prison received a call on his direct line, tipping him off that Mesrine was going to try and escape in two days' time on the 5th of May. No one took it very seriously. And indeed Mesrine did not escape on the 5th: it was raining on the 5th of May so the escape was postponed until the 8th...

After intensive study of the architecture and functioning of the prison and meticulous planning, Mesrine perfected his escape from La Santé. At 10.00am on the 8th May, Mesrine and two other prisoners escaped by using a secret cache of weapons that had been smuggled into the prison for them by a corrupt prison warder. They held up their guards, stealing their uniforms and locking them in the cells. Then they accosted a group of workmen fixing new bars on the windows of the cells and ordered them to move their ladder to the outside wall of the prison. Using a rope and grappling iron that had also been smuggled in for them, the escapees climbed over the wall and let themselves down the other side, stopping a passing car to make their getaway. By 10.25am Mesrine and his accomplice François Besse had become the first two men ever to escape from La Santé.

A mere eight days after the escape Mesrine and Besse got back to work, robbing a Paris gunsmiths for weaponry in broad daylight. As usual Mesrine had refused to run away and had simply stayed in Paris. Ten days later the pair robbed a casino.

Mesrine planned a series of revenge kidnappings: first he kidnapped a bank employee who had given evidence against him at his trial and forced him to open the bank vaults for him; then, in a one man campaign against maximum security prisons, he attempted to kidnap the judge who had sentenced him to 20 years, demanding that M. Petit would only be released if all top security wings in French prisons were closed. He said that unless they were closed he would begin to assassinate magistrates. The kidnapping of the judge went wrong but Mesrine managed to escape by running downstairs straight past the cops coming to get him and shouting "Quick! Mesrine's up there!" as he sped past them. As they all raced in the other direction he made good his escape. The one cop who did recognise him he disarmed and handcuffed to a drainpipe. This lonely plot was only discovered later by his colleagues when they had unsurprisingly failed to find Mesrine upstairs.

After another kidnapping of a wealthy banker and industrialist, Mesrine began planning a series of even more high profile kidnappings of major political and media figures. It was while he was engaged in this task that the police he had outsmarted for so long finally caught up with him. This time they weren't going to have him escaping again. On 2nd November 1979, as he was waiting at some traffic lights, his car was ambushed and surrounded by armed police. Mesrine was shot over 20 times in an execution-style killing. He had become an embarrassment to the French government at the highest level—French President Giscard d'Estaing had told the responsible minister only days earlier, "we really have to finish Mesrine off." ★

**Source: Mesrine—The Life and Death of a Supercrook by Carey Schofield (Penguin, 1980)**

**And Now... Jacques Mesrine the video! 90 min colour video in French. For a copy send £7.50 including postage (cheques payable to 'Chronos Publications') to: BM Chronos, London WC1N 3XX, UK.**





# Prisoners of War

This is an incomplete list of imprisoned radical ecologists, anarchists, Black Liberation activists, animal liberationists, anti-fascists and others we feel an affinity with. We think that they, and others like them, deserve our full support. This list was compiled in November 2000 and since then some prisoners may have been released or moved. For more up to date information we have included the contact details for some active UK and international prisoner support organisations.

## UK Prisoners

**Kuldip Bajwa** DN 7230, HMP Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG, UK. Sentenced in February 2000 to 21 months for violent disorder in London on June 18th 1999.

**Paul Revell** FR5599 (sentenced in July 2000 to 18 months), **Darryl Walker** FR5843 (sentenced in June 2000 to 15 months), **Kevin Townsend** FR6275 (sentenced to 9 months), **Mark Graham** EL6133 (sentenced in November 2000 to 7 months), **Michael Collins** FR6303 (sentenced in October 2000 to 2 years) are all inside for charges relating to actions in London on May Day 2000. They are all at HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18 3HS, UK.

**Simone Sabeddu** FB2520, HMYOI Feltham, Bedfont Road, Middx TW13 4ND, UK. Sentenced in August 2000 to 14 months for actions on May Day.

**Nikki Koole**, FB6530, HMYOI Feltham, Bedfont Road, Middx TW13 4ND, UK. Sentenced to 9 months for May Day.

**Gareth Williams**, FT7291, Ford Prison, Arundel, West Sussex BN18 0BX, UK. Sentenced to 6 months in September 2000 for N30.

**Mel Broughton** DJ8216, HMP The Mount, Molyneaux Avenue, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 0NZ, UK. Animal liberationist sentenced to 4 years for conspiracy to cause explosions.

**Saptal Ram** E94164, HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, Stamford Bridge, Yorks YO4 1PS, UK. Saptal was sentenced to life by an all white jury for defending himself in a racist attack. He's been inside for 13 years already and gets moved constantly as well as being subjected to racist abuse. Email: [FreeSaptalRam@ncadc.demon.co.uk](mailto:FreeSaptalRam@ncadc.demon.co.uk)

**Barry Horne** VC2141, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead, London SE28 0EB, UK. Barry is serving 18 years for anti-vivisection arson.

## US Prisoners

**Robert Lee Thaxton** #12112716, OSP, 2605 State Street, Salem, Oregon 97310, USA. Rob, a long time anarchist organiser, publisher and writer, is one of the few from around the world facing serious charges for June 18th. When it kicked off in Eugene in the US, Rob threw a rock at a cop who was charging at him in an effort to escape. He was arrested and sentenced to 88 months for Assault II and Riot. He's clearly been used as scapegoat—the one that didn't get away. He appreciates zines (send individually from a recognised distributor or publisher). More information from: Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous (AAA), PO Box 11331, Eugene, Oregon 97440, USA. For copies of Rob's recent zines, *Rob The Rich!* and *Fuck you Bearden!* send a cash donation.

**James Rio Johnson** #8952263, SCRI, 777 Stanton Blvd., Ontario, Oregon 97914, USA. James has been active in anarchist projects since the early 80s. He's in isolation, and is frequently moved, for killing a drug pimp who victimised women he cared about. More details from: AAA, PO Box 11331, Eugene, Oregon 97440, USA.







#### **Chris Plummer**

#677345, Route 2, Box 4400, Gatesville, Texas 76597, USA. Chris is serving a sentence of 15 years for actions on White Power scum. He's been trying to set up an anarchist lending library inside so if you can help by sending books or

pamphlets from recognised distributors or publishers, this would be greatly appreciated. Contact his Defence Committee at: PO Box 685136, Austin, Texas 78768, USA.

**Leonard Peltier** #89637-132, PO Box 1000, Leavenworth, Kansas 66048, USA. Leonard is an American Indian Movement (AIM) activist framed by a COINTELPRO operation for the murder of two FBI agents in 1975 for which he's serving two consecutive life sentences. Leonard's supporters are currently trying to pressure President Clinton to grant Leonard executive clemency in his short remaining time in office. Contact the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee at: LPDC, PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, USA. Email: [lpdc@ldir.net](mailto:lpdc@ldir.net)

**Robert H. Wilson** (Standing Deer) #640289, Pack Unit One, 2400 Wallace Pack Road, Navasota, Texas 77869, USA. Standing Deer, a Native American activist now in his late 70s, has been in maximum security prisons for over 20 years for robbing a jewellery store. He exposed the government plot to assassinate Leonard Peltier. His support group is pressing for his release as he is old and can't be seen as a threat to society anymore. Contact them at: SDDC, PO Box 368, Carrollton, Georgia 30117, USA.

**Harold Thompson** #93992, NWCC, Site 1, Route 1, Box 660, Tiptonville, Tennessee 38079, USA. Harold has been in prison since 1979, serving a life sentence plus about 90 years. He is a passionate anarchist and jailhouse lawyer who never gives up. He has also recently been busy suing Aryan Brotherhood scum who attacked him inside.

**Ted Kaczynski** #04475-046, US Pen. Admin. Max. Facility, PO Box 8500, Florence, Colorado 81226, USA. Ted is serving multiple life sentences for the Unabomber bombing campaign against techno-industrial society. Donations to: Friends of Ted Kaczynski, BM 1715, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

**Barrilee Bannister** #11309597, EOCL, 2500 Westgate, Pendleton, Oregon 97801, USA. Barrilee is a young working class mother serving a 12 year sentence for assaulting a man who was endangering her and her friend. She was moved out to a detention centre in Arizona where, as is often the case, many of the all male staff regularly abused their power over the female inmates. The

women who tried to speak out against this were usually silenced, until Barrilee and other women managed to get the media's attention—the story exploded nationally. The women were relocated and the centre fired or suspended 36 guards. Recently Barrilee has been assigned Security Threat Group (i.e. anarchist) status, just for political support by the Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC) and Rob Thaxton.

**Kebby Warner** #259737, Scott Correctional Facility, 47500, 5 Mile Road, Plymouth, Michigan 48170, USA. Kebby had her first child in prison and is fighting to stop the state taking the child away permanently and denying her all parental and visiting rights. Kebby has been receiving abuse from racist guards and her family for having a mixed race child. She is feeling very isolated and needs support.

**All Khalid Abdullah** #148130, 3225 John Conley Drive, Thumb Correctional Facility, Lapeer, Michigan 48446, USA. All is an Afro-American inside for 10-20 years for community self-defense against drug dealers. He's very active and is involved with the PPWC, and he faces repression because of this.

**Silvia Baraldini** fought against the Vietnam War and in support of Black Liberation and Puerto Rican independence. Convicted in the US she was sentenced to 43 years for participating in the successful 1979 escape of Assata Shakur and for conspiracy against the government. The long campaign to get her transferred to her native Italy has recently been successful. For her new Italian address contact: Release Silvia, 3543 18th Street, Box 30, San Francisco, California 94110, USA.

**Karen Horning** #006444-049 CCS, FMC Carswell, PO Box 27137, Fort Worth, Texas 76127, USA. Karen's been sentenced to six life sentences for distribution of LSD and refusal to grass on her mates. She's involved with the PPWC and is a jailhouse lawyer.

**Jerome White-Bey** #37479, Potosi Correctional Centre, Route 2, Box 2222, Mineral Point, MO 63660, USA. Jerome is an anarchist prison activist who set up the Missouri Prison Labour Union to fight against slave labour in prisons.

**Larry Giddings** #10917-086, PO Box 1000, Lewisburg, PA 17837, USA. Larry is an anti-authoritarian prisoner jailed in 1973 for attempted expropriation. He was paroled in 1978 but re-arrested in 1979 while trying to liberate a comrade from prison. He's doing multiple life



*Silvia Baraldini*





Ojore N. Lutalo

sentences plus 75 years.

**Bill Dunne** #10916-086, Box 1000, Marion, Illinois 62959, USA. Bill was sentenced to 90 years for trying to liberate a prisoner with Larry Giddings.

**Ojore N. Lutalo** #59860, CN-861, MCU, Trenton, New

Jersey 49444, USA. Ojore is a Black Liberation activist and anarchist. He was jailed in 1975 for expropriation, paroled in 1980 but re-arrested in 1982 for an attack on a drug dealer and sentenced to 20-40 years.

**Mark Cook** #027100, B3-05, Washington State Reformatory, PO Box 777, Monroe, Washington 98272-0777, USA. Mark is a former Black Panther and is in prison for actions carried out with the George Jackson Brigade, such as expropriation and prisoner liberation. He is serving two life sentences plus 30 years. His support group is fighting for his release after more than 20 years. Contact them at: Mark Cook Freedom Committee, PO Box 85763, Seattle, Washington 98145-2763, USA.

**Sundiata Acoli** #39794-066, Box 3000, USP Allenwood, White Deer, PA 17887, USA. Sundiata is a former Black Panther first imprisoned in 1969 in the Panther 21 case. Upon release he joined the Black Liberation Army. After a police ambush in 1973 at which a comrade and a cop were killed, Sundiata was sentenced to life plus 30 years for murder. In his early 60s, he is one of the longest serving political prisoners in the world. For more details contact: Sundiata Acoli Defense Campaign, PO Box 5538, Manhattenville Station, Harlem, New York 10027, USA.

**Sekou Odinga** #05228-054, 3901 Klien Blvd., Lompoc, California 93436, USA. Sekou is a former Black Panther and was also later involved with the Black Liberation Army for 12 years. Chased and shot at by the police he shot over his shoulder and was sentenced to 25 years for attempted murder of a policeman, plus a further 20 years for liberating Assata Shakur and expropriating an armoured truck.

**Russell Shoats** #AF-3855, SCI Greene, 1040 East R. Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA. Russell is serving multiple life sentences since 1972 for Black Liberation Army actions. He's currently active in the struggle against the notorious Control Units.

**Shaka Shakur** #28443, Indiana State Reformatory, PO Box 30, Pendleton, IN 46064, USA. Shaka, a black prison activist and organiser, was sentenced to 30 years after being stitched up

for armed robbery. For more information contact: SSDC, PO Box 565, Madison, WI 53701, USA.

**Philip Berrigan** #292-139 and **Rev. Steve Kelly** #292-140 both at Roxbury Correctional Institution, 18701 Roxbury Road, Hagerstown, MD 21746, USA. **Susan Crane** #916-999, Maryland Correctional Institute for Women, PO Box 535, Jessup, MD 20794, USA. **Elizabeth Walz** #995376, Baltimore Co. Detention Centre, 200 Court House Court, Towson, MD 21204, USA. These four Ploughshares activists were sentenced to 18-30 months each on 23rd March 2000 for damaging two A-10 'Warthog' anti-tank aircraft and then handing themselves in.

## Free Free! Free Critter!

Surveillance by the police and FBI, media hate-mongering and arrests have been on the increase in Eugene, Oregon recently. On June 16th 2000, two anarchists were stopped by police for a routine traffic violation at 1.00am, and ended up booked in on charges of Criminal Mischief and Arson. The media were told the two were being held on suspicion of an arson attack on a car showroom in Eugene the same night. Free's house was searched for such dangerous items as matches. On June 23rd they were indicted on nine felony counts and one misdemeanor. These include charges relating to another attempt at arson at an oil company. Critter entered a plea bargain and has been sentenced to five and a half years imprisonment. Free is still expected to stand trial and a new date has yet to be set.

**Jeffrey Luers** (Free) #1306729 and **Craig Marshall** (Critter) #1340996 are both at: 101 W. 5th Street, Eugene, Oregon 97401, USA. They can only receive written correspondence and they'd really appreciate reading material. Photocopies must have no staples and books must be sent from a publisher. For further information contact their defence committee at: [aaa@efn.org](mailto:aaa@efn.org)

## 420 Arrested in Philadelphia

On August 1st 2000, thousands of people took direct action against the Republican National Convention in the US. Hundreds were arrested, abused in custody and charged with misdemeanours and about 30 with felonies. The latter face sentences of up to 60 years. The defendants especially need financial help to cover the coming court costs. Get in touch with the R2K legal collective at: The Defenstrator, PO Box 30922, Philadelphia PA 19104, USA. Web: [www.thepartysover.org](http://www.thepartysover.org) or Friends of Camilo, PO Box 58247, Philadelphia PA 19102, USA. Email: [stayingstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:stayingstrong@hotmail.com)



**MOVE** was a mainly black revolutionary group with a radical and holistic ecological perspective who were consistently persecuted by Philadelphia police during the 1970s and 80s. This culminated in the police firebombing of their commune in 1985 in which 11 people died. The remaining living members, the MOVE 9, were framed for the murder of a cop and sentenced to up to 100 years each. Merle Africa died in prison in 1998 under suspicious circumstances.

**Debbie Simms Africa** #006307, **Janet Holloway Africa** #006308 and **Janine Phillips Africa** #006309 all at: SCI Cambridge Springs, 451 Fullerton Ave, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403-1238, USA. **Michael Davis Africa** AM4973 and **Charles Simms Africa** AM4975 both at: SCI Grateford, PO Box 244, Grateford, PA 19426-0244, USA. **Edward Goodman Africa** AM4974 at: 301 Morea Rd, Frackville, PA 17932, USA. **William Phillips Africa** AM4984 and **Delbert Orr Africa** AM4985 are both at: SCI Dallas Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612, USA.

For more information about MOVE contact them at: MOVE, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia PA 19143, USA. Email: [movellia@aol.com](mailto:movellia@aol.com)

**Mumia Abu-Jamal** AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 East R. Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA. Mumia is an ex-Black Panther, radical journalist and MOVE supporter who was framed for the murder of a cop in 1981. He's been awaiting execution since 1998 but this has been temporarily stayed due to massive international campaigns. Support is vital in this case. For more details contact: International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143, USA.

## Other Countries

**Thomas Meyer Falk**, JVA Bruchsal, Zelle 3117, Schoenbornstr. 32, 76646 Bruchsal, Germany. In 1996 Thomas was sent down for a bank robbery. He'll be inside until at least 2010. Because of his strong beliefs, he's been subject to very harsh repression and is kept in solitary with daily cell raids, suppression and censorship of mail and no access to education. On top of this his cell is in very bad disrepair. Protest letters and faxes are needed towards improving his conditions, to help with this contact ABC Innsbruck—address at end of article. When writing to him don't mention you are a political supporter. Besides hand-written letters, the only things he can get in the post are 3 International Reply Coupons (IRCs) at a time.

**Revolutionary Cells Arrests, Germany.** At 6.00am on Sunday 19th December 1999, heavily armed riot police stormed Axel Haug's and Harald Glaede's flats in Berlin, as well as Sabine Eckle's in Frankfurt, and all three were arrested. At the same time the Mehringhof, a social centre in Berlin Axel and Harald work at, was surrounded by 1,000

police. They trashed the place looking for some 'secret weapons' cache, but just found two immigrants, Frank and Alicia, who they promptly deported to Russia and Bolivia. All this was based on the confessions of a recently arrested alleged member of the Revolutionary Cells, who were responsible for campaigns of criminal damage in the 1980s. For current prisoner addresses and more information contact: Mehringhof Soll-Buero, Gneisenaustr. 2a, 10961 Berlin, Germany. Email: [info@freilassung.de](mailto:info@freilassung.de) Web: [www.freilassung.de](http://www.freilassung.de)

**Nikos Maziotis**, c/o Dafni Vaganou, Ozortz 3, 10689 Athens, Greece. In 1999 Nikos was sentenced to 15 years for bombing the Greek Ministry of Industry. He did this in solidarity with the inhabitants of Strymonikos Bay who have been resisting multinational TVX-Gold's attempts to build a factory there for over a decade. He is the first prisoner in Greece to be officially classified as political.

**Klaudiusz Gliklich**, Zaklad Karny, ul. Wlejska 3, 99400 Kowicz, Poland. In November 1991, Klaudiusz was attacked by three Nazis. Klaudiusz had trained in judo for years and managed to defend himself. One of the Nazis called the police and after being arrested and serving 3 years Klaudiusz was let out on parole. Unfortunately his parole officer turned out to be a former Nazi too. After being attacked by Nazis again and defending himself again, Klaudiusz has ended up back in prison where he will be until early 2002.





## Things You can do to Help...

### Adopt a prisoner

If you're active in a group or campaign you could choose one or two prisoners to consistently support. Pass cards round meetings, send useful stuff to them, knock up a flyposter and get their case some publicity if they could use it, or get in touch with the prisoner's support group if there is one. You can take this on as an individual too.

### Write to a prisoner

Prison is isolating, so letting a prisoner know they are not forgotten helps break this down. Sometimes just a friendly card can boost their morale. Writing for the first time to a complete stranger can be awkward. A card with some well wishes, a bit about who you are and asking what you can do to help is often enough. Don't expect prisoners to write back. Sometimes the number of letters they can receive or write is restricted, or they just might not be very good at writing. To help, include a couple of stamps or, if writing abroad, International Reply Coupons (IRCs) that you can get from any post office. Write on clean paper and don't re-use envelopes. Remember to put a return address on the envelope. Ask what the prisoner can have sent to them, as this varies from prison to prison. Books and pamphlets usually have to be sent from a recognised distributor, bookshop or publisher (ask at a friendly bookshop). Tapes, videos, writing pads, zines, toiletries and postal orders are some of the things you might be able to send. Food just gets eaten by screws.

Remember that all letters are opened and looked through so don't write stuff that could endanger anyone—this doesn't mean you should be over paranoid and write one meaningless comment on the weather after the other. Be prepared to share a bit of your life to brighten up someone else's.

### Protest letters

Petitioning Tony Blair asking him to stop being a capitalist bastard might well be futile, but writing letters to relevant places requesting something realistic such as an appeal, transfer, vegan food etc. on behalf of a prisoner can help improve their chances. Prisoners who seem to be 'in the public eye' do tend to be treated better.

### Other support

There is so much more than can be done, it's up to you and your imagination and your contact with a prisoner. Things to think of trying include; getting publicity for the case, visits, financial support or pickets of prisons.

**Grzegorz Chyska**, Zaklad Karny, ul. Katowica 4, 46-200 Kluczbork, Poland. In February 1999, Grzegorz was, not for the first time, attacked by some Nazis. Grzegorz and his mate, Wojciech Grabia, ended up being charged with assault and banditry. Wojciech has been released, but since Grzegorz had an outstanding warrant, he's in for 3 years and 7 months.

**Tomek Wilkoszewski**, Zaklad Karny, ul. Orzechowa 5, 98-200 Sieradz, Poland. Tomek was sentenced to 15 years after killing a Nazi in self defence in Radomsko in 1997. He has recently been denied an appeal for a shorter sentence.

**The Cordoba 4** are one Spanish and three Italian anarchists—**Michel Pontollillo**, c.p. de Villabona Aptdo 33271 Gijon, Asturias, Spain. **Giorgio Rodriguez**, c.p. de Topas Carretera Gijon-Seville, 37799 Salamanca, Spain. **Giovanni Barcia**, c.p. de Badajoz mod. 7 Carretera de Olivenza, 06071 Badajoz, Spain. **Claudio Lavazza**, c.r. Huelva mod. 16, Carretera la Ribera s/n 2161 Huelva, Spain—who were arrested in Cordoba, Spain, for a bank robbery. Even though there wasn't very much evidence against them (other than that they're anarchists) they were recently sentenced to 11 years each. In November they will have been sentenced for further incidents involving imprisoning the Italian consul in solidarity with Italian anarchist prisoners.

**Betty Krawczyk**, Burnaby Correctional Center for Women, 7900 Fraser Park Drive, Burnaby, BC V5J 5H1, Canada. On the 15th of September 2000, eight people were found guilty of criminal contempt relating to anti-logging actions in the Elaho Valley in 1999. The others have all been released or are still to be sentenced, but Betty, a 72 year old great grandmother, is serving a one year sentence.

## Italian Repression

There's a steady stream of reports from Italy of extensive repression. Ecological anarchists, squatters and animal liberationists are becoming more and more active, but with the help of notorious judges such as Judge Marini and the ROS special police squad, the state is clamping down hard on resistance.

For more information contact: **El Passo Occupato**, Via Passo Buole 47, 10127 Torino, Italy or **Sollkom Italien**, c/o Infoladen, Breisacherstr. 12, 81667 Munich, Germany who produce the English and German magazine *Breakout* which focuses on Italian repression.

**Silvano Pellissaro**, Com. Mastrolietro, Via Ferreri Noll 2, San Poso, 10080 Torino, Italy. On January 31st 2000, Silvano was sentenced to 6 years and 10 months for bombing the construction of a new high velocity train (TAV) intended to cut through the beautiful Val de Susa. Please write to Silvano in Italian, Spanish or French. ★



# Beaten Up, Fitted Up, Locked Up

**Mark Barnsley and the Pomona Incident—A Miscarriage of Justice**

**Pamphlet available for £2.00 (cheques/postal orders made payable to 'Justice for Mark Barnsley') from: Plain Wordz, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX, UK.**

Mark Barnsley is a working class anarchist from Sheffield who stumbled into a nightmare whilst out for a quiet drink with a friend and his baby daughter on June 8th 1994. After some verbal abuse, a gang of drunk students attacked him, completely unprovoked. They chased him, kicking him on the ground and causing many injuries. During the attack one of them pulled out a knife, which, fearing for his life, Mark managed to grab and hold on to. Even though he didn't brandish it, this ended up being the basis of his conviction for assault. In a trial marked by contradictions on behalf of the students (who had good lawyers), a biased judge and a hate campaign by the local newspaper The Sheffield Star against Mark, he was found guilty of Greivous Bodily Harm (GBH) and sentenced to 12 years in prison. None of the students were ever charged.

This new pamphlet presents the whole story, including quotes from the evidence, the judge's summing up and character references. It also draws attention to the murder of Eric Cobourne, an elderly ex-docker, by middle class students in 1995, who decided they "didn't like him". They killed a man, but their treatment and Mark's by the judicial system couldn't be different. The class war is dead? My arse.

Mark is starting his seventh year of imprisonment in maximum security prisons. He was recently fitted up for riot in Long Lartin prison along with other 'troublesome' prisoners, which involved being locked in a cell he was talking to some mates in, then being attacked and beaten by screws in riot gear. Charges against him were dropped lacking any evidence, but since that he's been sent to a different prison almost every

month—all of them far away from his friends and family in Sheffield. He could be out by now if he gave up protesting his innocence, but he won't. As he says: "I am an innocent man and freedom is my right. I am not prepared to compromise myself by submitting to any form of conditional release. If that means spending extra years incarcerated in top security prisons, then it is a price I am prepared to pay, albeit regrettably. My life has been completely destroyed by the terrible injustice that I have suffered, all that I have left are my principles and integrity and I am not prepared to compromise them by bending my knee to the parole board."

Word is getting out about Mark's case and the campaign to free him is growing all the time. He has recently been relocated to a prison on the Isle of Wight and the campaign is encouraging people to protest about this with letters, information and solidarity actions. Everybody should read this pamphlet, get outraged at British Justice, and then find out how they can help.★

**For more details contact:**

**Justice for Mark Barnsley**

**PO Box 381**

**Huddersfield HD1 3XX**

**UK**

**Telephone: 07944 522001**

**Email: [barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com](mailto:barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com)**

**Web: [www.appleonline.net/justiceuk/eddie/mark.html](http://www.appleonline.net/justiceuk/eddie/mark.html)**

**Or you can write to Mark directly at:**

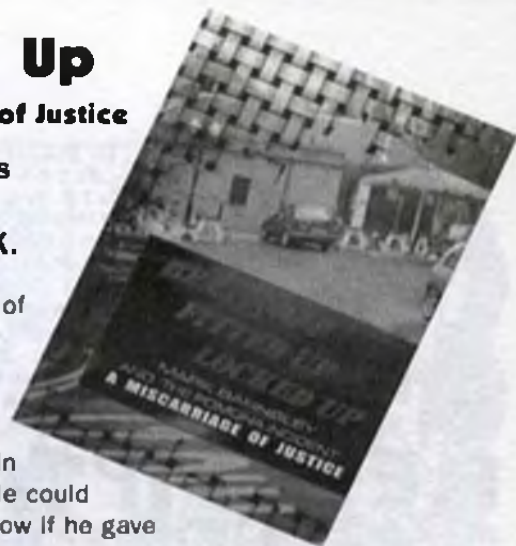
**Mark Barnsley WA2897**

**HMP Frankland**


**Brasside**

**Durham DH1 5YD**

**UK**






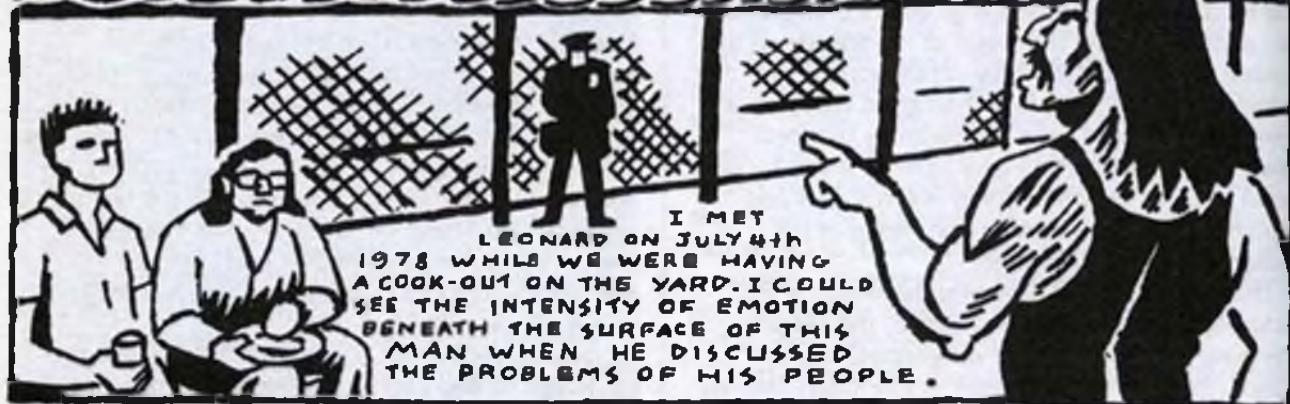


MY NAME IS STANDING DEER. I AM FULL BLOOD ONEIDA/CHACTAW. 18 YEARS AGO. WHILE DOING COMPULSORY EXPROPRIATIONS FROM BANKING FACILITIES, I ZIGGED WHEN I SHOULD HAVE ZAGGED AND THUS WAS CAPTURED. I HAVE BEEN LOCKED DOWN IN SUPER-MAX EVER SINCE.

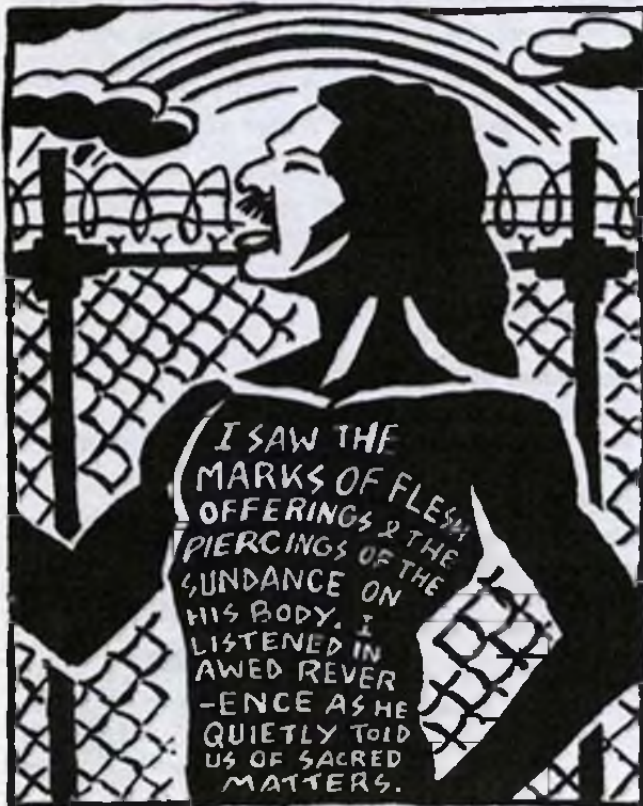
# REDEMPTION



IN MAY 1978 I WAS HIRED BY AGENTS OF THE UNITED STATES TO KILL LEONARD PELTIER.



I MET LEONARD ON JULY 4th 1978 WHILE WE WERE HAVING A COOK-OUT ON THE YARD. I COULD SEE THE INTENSITY OF EMOTION BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THIS MAN WHEN HE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEMS OF HIS PEOPLE.



I SAW THE MARKS OF FLESH OFFERINGS & THE GUNDANCE ON HIS BODY. I LISTENED IN AWED REVERENCE AS HE QUIETLY TOLD US OF SACRED MATTERS.

I THOUGHT "WHAT AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD WE LIVE IN."



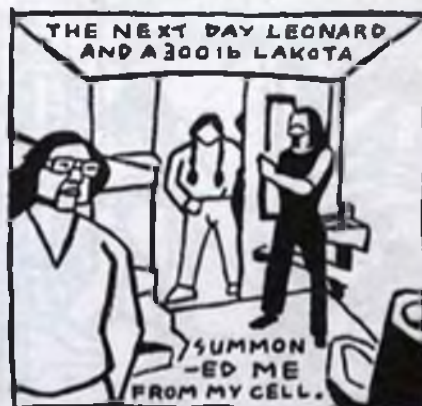
WHEN THE CRIMINALS OF THIS WORLD PORTRAY THEIR VICTIMS AS CRIMINALS AND MAKE 90% OF THE SLEEPING FUTURE VICTIMS BELIEVE THEIR CHARADE.

I FOUND MYSELF REVEALING THE PLOT TO HIM.



I REEKED OF SHAME.













SCRIPT: STANDING DEER PENCILS: SETH TOBOCMAN INKS: BARBARA LEE



# Prisoner Support Groups

## UK Prisoner Support Groups

**Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group (ALFSG)**  
BCM 1160  
London WC1N 3XX

**Brighton Anarchist Black Cross (ABC)**  
c/o 6 Tilbury Place  
Brighton BN2 2GY  
Web: [www.schnews.org.uk/prisoners](http://www.schnews.org.uk/prisoners)  
Email: [brightonabc@email.com](mailto:brightonabc@email.com)  
Support for anarchist and class struggle prisoners.

**Earth Liberation Prisoners (ELP)**  
c/o Cornerstone Resource Centre  
16 Sholebroke Avenue,  
Leeds LS7 3HB  
Email: [earthlibprisoner@mail.com](mailto:earthlibprisoner@mail.com)  
Web: [www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk](http://www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk)  
Support for ecological direct action prisoners.

**Haven**  
BM Haven  
London WC1N 3XX  
A free books to prisoners project.

**Prisoner Support Project**  
14 Robertson Road  
Eastville  
Bristol BS5 6JY  
Email: [prisonersupport@mail.com](mailto:prisonersupport@mail.com)

**Vegan Prisoners Support Group (VPSG)**  
PO Box 194  
Enfield  
Middlesex EN1 3HD

## International Prisoner Support Groups

**ABC Federation**  
ABC Jacksonville  
4204 Herschel Street #20  
Jacksonville  
Florida 32210  
USA  
Web: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~abc/>

**ABC Innsbruck**  
LOM Postlagernd  
6024 Innsbruck, Austria  
Email: [abcibk@hotmail.com](mailto:abcibk@hotmail.com)

**ABC Argentina**  
Cruz Negra Anarquista Buenos Aires  
CC 3411-C1000WBI,

Buenos Aires  
Argentina

**ABC Dijon**  
Maioka  
BP 536  
21014 Dijon  
Cedex  
France

**ABC Poznan**  
PO Box 5  
60-966 Poznan 31  
Poland  
Email: [rozbrat@fiko2.onet.pl](mailto:rozbrat@fiko2.onet.pl)

**ABC Spain**  
Cruz Negra Anarquista Secc Iberica  
Paseo Alberto Palacio #2  
CP 28021 Villaverde Alto  
Madrid  
Spain

**Anarchist Prisoners Legal Aid Network (APLAN)**  
818 SW 3rd Avenue PMB #354  
Portland  
Oregon 97204  
USA  
Email: [aplan69@hotmail.com](mailto:aplan69@hotmail.com)

**Libertad**  
c/o Miguel Angel Cortez D.  
Apdo 17-808  
CP 11411  
Mexico DF

**Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC)**  
PO Box 554  
Lincoln MA 10773  
USA  
Email: [cwritsher@aol.com](mailto:cwritsher@aol.com)



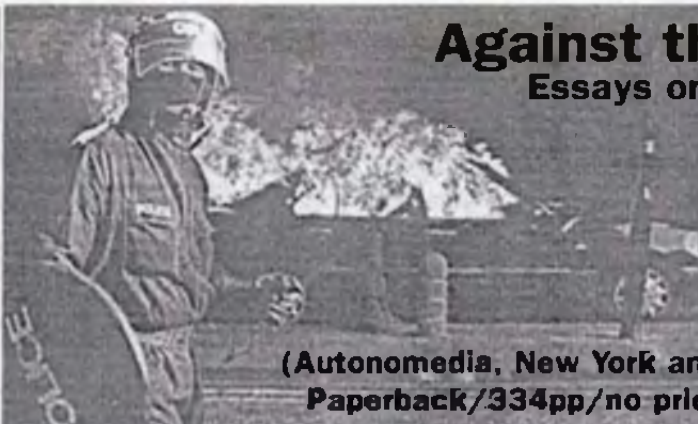


# Against the Megamachine

Essays on Empire and Its Enemies

by David Watson

(Autonomedia, New York and Fifth Estate, Detroit, 1999)  
Paperback/334pp/no price given/ISBN 1-57027-087-2



*Fifth Estate (FE)*, the US's longest running anarchist publication, has been criticised by some anarchists of note lately for having lost its critical edge. Even if this is true, the people involved with *FE* over the years—close to 30 now—set such a high standard that few anarchist publications can aspire to approach what they've accomplished. They, along with only a few philosophical allies, have spent much of the past 15-20 years examining the very foundations of civilisation to describe how thoroughly its subjects have been conquered—body, mind and soul—by the Megamachine of this book's title: AKA Leviathan in Fredy Perlman's epic book *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* In addition to Perlman and Watson, *FE* can also claim to have nurtured the explorations and writings of John Zerzan as well as Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin. When, as promised in the author's introduction, *FE* publishes an anthology of many of the more outstanding of its essays, articles and rants, it will arm many eco-anarchists with the intellectual background they need to solidify their stance in the fight against the Megamachine. Sad to say, but anthropologists and archaeologists are far ahead of the anarcho-primitivists in publishing broad-ranging condemnations—or inquiries into the wisdom of—the world's conquest by the West. The forthcoming *FE Reader* will do much to help make up for the lack of anarcho-primitivist literature when it appears. Until then, we have this collection of some of Watson's more meaningful writings, not only from *FE*, but also from publications such as *The New Internationalist*.

This is his third published book, the previous two being a critique of the US radical environmental/Earth First! movement in *How Deep is Deep Ecology?* and an even more critical analysis of Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology sect in *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology*. Altogether, these books display Watson's keen dissident intellect and emphasise his eco-anarchist dialectic. The best aspect of *Against The Megamachine (ATMM)*, though, is the inclusion of his writings which delve into subjects not often

addressed enough by anarchist theorists—the imperial use of language, spiritualism from an anarchist perspective and the effects of militarisation on society and the militarised (soldiers and their increasingly civilian targets).

For those whose opposition to the never-satiated demands of technological corporate states is based mostly on intuition and personal observation, this book is an invaluable introduction to contemporary philosophy, psychology, anthropology and other fields of study which have—unwittingly or not—served to reinforce some of anarchy's most damning criticisms of society. Watson's take on many of these issues is very much enhanced by the influence of other-than-Western ways of thinking, as well as by radical eco-feminism. Considering anarchy's condemnation of falsely imposed boundaries, both internal and geographical, one would think there would be more such cross-germination. This is, unfortunately, not the case and we suffer greatly by not spending more time and energy communicating across linguistic and national boundaries. Some of the freshest, most exciting anarchist ideas are coming from South America these days, and Korea seems ripe for massive social change (if the US and China would butt out of their affairs).

*ATMM* offers the reader introductions to some of the most notable dissident archaeologists and strongest critics of 'First World' society to have emerged in the last century: Lewis Mumford, Stanley Diamond, Marshall Sahlins, Mircea Eliade, Vandana Shiva, Ivan Illich and Jacques Ellul. Also included are some barbs directed at other notable contemporary anarchist writers, particularly Jason McQuinn (Lev Cheryni), John Zerzan and Feral Faun. Though he engages these three in some back and forth discussions, Watson really lowers the boom on Bookchin and Chomsky, mostly for their refusal to break out of 19th Century notions—like 'progress'—in order to bring their dialectic into the 21st Century, which they have failed to do.

This is precisely what places publications like *FE* and *Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed* in the



forefront of opposition to the all-consuming technocratic/industrial states. For much too long, tradition laden anarchists and syndicalists have tried—and usually failed—to convince the general public that 19th Century anarchist ideals have relevance and meaning to present day society. The traditionalists in the anarchist milieu—along with their fellow travellers in mainstream socialist and communist groups—continue to cling to ideologies so outdated that they've lost touch not only with discontent amongst the working class, but dissident scholars as well. We have the Situationists to thank for helping to bring an anti-capitalist critique into a contemporary idiom, and those they inspired—Perlman, for example—for expanding their dialectic far beyond an examination of the failures of capitalist society.

I feel a strong need to interject something of a personal aside here, since right now—as I write this—I am also engaged in an exchange of letters and ideas with a number of New African and other Black Liberation prisoners here in the US. The notion of 'progress', the slow evolutionary process which has nurtured Western civilisation and enabled it to spread and grow into the cancer-upon-the-earth that it is today, is a racist concept—amongst many of its other failings. It would give the anarchist perspective a great deal more relevance to the plight of exploited people the world over if this point were to be more thoroughly incorporated into the eco-anarchist/primitivist critique.

To be fair to the anarcho-traditionalists and their antecedents, though, it needs to be mentioned that Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* definitely introduced the mixture of anthropology with anarchist criticism of the state. Kropotkin's failing was that he didn't follow through with this line of inquiry. Maybe it was his era's fascination with new gadgets and peoples' infatuation with their own cleverness that blinded him to the dangers run away industrialism would bring. Even the great bore Bookchin—one of the earliest radical ecological philosophers—failed to put one and one together, and two of his books that should stand out as his greatest achievements (*Remaking Society* and *The Ecology of Freedom*) are instead utter failures, as he spends half the books condemning technological society and praising simpler lifestyles in contrast, then uses much of the rest of the books praising technology—provided that it is used for good and not evil ends. Not all 19th Century anarchists were taken in by the spectacle of industrialism though—Voltairine de Cleyre comes to mind. Anarchists would also do well to rediscover the writings of Henry David Thoreau—war tax resister, insurrectionary abolitionist theorist and nature lover.

Watson's book benefits greatly from his having had a chance to rework his writings. Some of the best—and longest—essays are combinations of related pieces that were published separately. The result is a book filled with examinations of radical scholarship and thought not often accessible to a casual, self-motivated reader. Though I don't see a price printed on the cover, I can't imagine it being so great as to make it unaffordable to just about any 'First World' consumer, it being a paperback only offering. Be warned, though, that *ATMM* is a gateway book and reading it could lead to more reading, even to the use of hard-covered books. If David Watson—or his pen names George Bradford and T. Fulano—are not familiar to you, you should seek out this book. The well-read anarchist will already be familiar with many of the concepts presented here, and his approach to some subjects from non-rational perspectives may well provide stodgy intellectuals a much needed break from concrete reality and offer a glimpse of a softer, more relaxed state of mind. That is probably the best thing that can be said of *ATMM*.

In the Church of Western Civilisation Superiority, Watson has tossed an intellectual brick through the stained glass windows that colour our perceptions of what lies beyond, and has shed light on the gloomy wasteland that engulfs us. The challenge now is to explore the terrain beyond. ★





# Beasts of Burden

## Capitalism • Animals • Communism

(Published by Antagonism Press, c/o  
BM Makhno, London WC1N 3XX, UK)  
Paperback/32pp/Free/No ISBN

Whether you liked the music or not, the anarcho-punk scene was undoubtedly a major force in the radical politics and culture of the 1980s. It helped to revive the largely moribund anti-nuclear and anarchist movements, triggered an upsurge in militant animal liberation, and played a role in industrial disputes like the miners' strike and Wapping, as well as in the resistance to the poll tax. Its influence can still be felt today (and not just in increased sales of smack and super strong lager), for instance in the way it has contributed to the emergence of Earth First! and ecological struggles throughout the 1990s.

Of course, like every self-respecting movement, it also experienced bitter schisms, most notably when many turned their backs on animal liberation and similar 'lifestylist' concerns, opting instead for the heady world of traditional class struggle politics. While *Beasts of Burden (BoB)* is mainly addressed to these people and seeks to repair the rift by making the communist case for animals (*Red in Tooth and Claw*)—it is of more than just historical interest or as an exercise in movement marriage guidance counselling. Philosophically speaking, to attempt to reunite such seemingly disparate perspectives (*à la* the old chant "Human freedom, animal rights—One struggle, one fight") has to be welcomed. But it has more direct practical relevance than that. In the 'PostScript: Anarcho-punk, the ALF and the miners' strike—a cautionary tale from the 1980s', the authors warn that for the "numbers of anti-roads protesters adopting or moving towards communist positions", this theoretical development "can be a step forward, but not if it means abandoning what is already subversive in your activity"—as it often did with our punky predecessors. Putting away 'childish' things to self-consciously prepare for the serious business of Revolution? With such political specialism comes the danger, as Uncle Raoul once pointed out, of losing sight of "what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints"...

However, this tale is just a PostScript—the bulk of *BoB* revolves around defining many struggles against animal exploitation as "an expression of the communist movement" and as "a starting point for a fundamental questioning of the way we live our lives". While there may be truth in both descriptions—more, I suspect, to the latter—regrettably a number of its arguments in support of this premise aren't completely convincing.



Much of it consists of a whistlestop tour through the anthropological record, from pre-history to the present day, and highlights the extent to which our social forms have been intertwined with the use of animals—particularly with the production and consumption of meat. (In this context it is worth noting that the words 'capital', 'chattel' and 'cattle' share the same root.<sup>1</sup>) *BoB* effectively demonstrates how "the animal industry was the starting motor of primitive accumulation"—primitive accumulation being the embryonic stage of capitalism around the world, the means by which control of the means of production (i.e. the land) is wrested from the 'producer' by trailblazing capitalists with hordes of livestock.

The treatment of animals seems to have served as a template for more recent capitalist innovations as well. Apparently Henry Ford (the Great Satan himself) admitted that "the idea for the automobile assembly line 'came in a general way from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers used in dressing beef.'" In this sense animals are a testing ground for cutting edge capitalism; topically, in relation to advances in biotechnology and the current furore over whether manipulative techniques already applied to animals should be applied to humanity.

But the further you go back with this sort of historical investigation, the more tenuous it becomes. I am always uncomfortable with glib assertions as to the practices of ancient, primitive societies. I think *BoB* is probably right when it says that such societies viewed animals not "as commodities, but... with a mixture of awe, wonder, respect and fear. Instead of being seen as subordinate species, they are seen as separate beings sharing the world with humans"—but no evidence is cited for this. Aside from wish





Nature as fondly imagined...



Nature as it really is.

fulfilment, how do—or can—we know, especially when dealing with almost exclusively oral cultures? How can we divine what occurred thousands of years ago, on the strength of usually quite scanty archaeological remains—when frequently we cannot even agree on the meaning of what happened 200 years ago (or two weeks ago, for that matter!) Being uncharitable, it is akin to using a wet match to cast light on a bottomless pit (in a gale force wind!)

While it does say that “we should avoid ascribing to agriculture the role of ‘original sin,’” *BoB* also states that “relations between humans and other animals, and between humans themselves, were radically transformed by the development of agriculture.” To this extent they shadow John Zerzan and his perceived need to go ever further back, in order that we might locate the source of our ‘fall from grace’ and of all our earthly ills. Broadly speaking, *BoB* identifies the tribes of primitive communism with a minimum of meat consumption (and therefore ‘good’). Conversely, capitalism and its civilising forebears are associated with an ever increasing level of domestication and exploitation of animals and plants, and are therefore ‘bad’. From this initial domestication ultimately flowed states, classes, cities, work, private property, patriarchy, and all those other things so dear to our hearts (even though it does acknowledge that “some form of agriculture existed for thousands of years without particularly radical social change.”)

In some ways I feel that *BoB* caricatures these ‘primitive’ cultures: “People only take what they

need from nature, and where animals are hunted it is on a limited basis.” Firstly, as far as we know, many tribal peoples ‘managed’ nature quite extensively. Native Americans burned the forests and prairies. Australian aborigines practised ‘firestick farming’ too, with the result that “It has been argued that the ecology of Australia is the single greatest human artifact.”<sup>2</sup> Much of that archetypal forested wilderness the Amazon “may very well reflect the Intercessions of man ... [the Kayapo Indians] have collected germ plasm over a region roughly the size of Western Europe and planted it in areas of interest to them. They place plants along trekking trails [motorway service stations!], in forest gaps, in camping sites, in favoured hunting areas, and near gardens. These produce “resource islands,” areas of useful plants not necessarily located close to the village but important to the larger human community and regional ecology. These fruit and food plants also serve to attract and maintain populations of wild animals, a highly prized food source for the Kayapo.”<sup>3</sup> Animals can also actively manipulate their environment (or ‘reproduce their world’, as Marx might have said). It’s not just my special phat-tailed friends, the beavers; ants ‘milk’ aphids and ‘farm’ fungus—and then there’s the amazing ‘alligator ponds’ of the Florida Everglades. Created by the alligators, they are often the only oases left in the dry season, a vital lifeline at the most inhospitable time of the year—which means that they lure vast numbers of birds and other animals and thus furnish the alligators with an extremely well-stocked larder—similar to the ‘game gardens’ of the Kayapo and others. Are these ants and alligators then capitalists in waiting, and their eradication part of any truly revolutionary project?

Secondly, to claim that animals are only hunted on a limited basis in primitive communism seems to fly in the face of the available evidence. What about the horrific mass extinctions of species seen in North and South America, Australia, Madagascar, New Zealand and Hawaii? Some attribute this to climate change, but it seems strangely coincidental that these extinction waves should flare up in different places at different times, shortly after humans appear on the scene.<sup>4</sup>

Having established that capitalism is rooted in animal abuse, *BoB* examines the extent to which modern-day capitalism still depends on such abuse—responding to those critics who maintain that since “capital has no imperative to exploit animals... opposition to animal exploitation offers no threat to capitalism.” While “a consistently ‘cruelty free’ capitalism” is indeed extremely unlikely, this does not automatically mean that animals remain indispensable to the continued functioning of capitalism, and that without them the whole minging edifice would collapse. I feel



that (without diminishing its value) animal liberation poses a threat only to certain specific sectors of the economy—and, as *BoB* points out, “Capitalism ... is based on social relations mediated by property and money. As long as these relations exist, capitalism will reproduce itself, regardless of the fate of any particular company.” Our masters don’t particularly care what they sell (be it bullocks or binary code), as long as it sells. It is not so much the specific content of a commodity that is important, but the form itself, and the value that a particular commodity yields at a particular time. *BoB*’s account of primitive accumulation includes Marx’s comment that “it was ‘the rise in the price of wool’ which made it profitable to transform ‘arable land into sheepwalks,’” thereby dispossessing peasant farmers. The point is not that they had been evicted to make way for the animal industry *per se*,

but for an immediately more profitable land use. Likewise, Marx is also quoted as saying that “under slavery... the worker is distinguishable only as ‘*instrumentum vocale*’ [speaking implement] from an animal, which is

‘*instrumentum semi-vocale*’ [semi-mute implement], and from a lifeless implement, which is ‘*instrumentum mutum*’ [mute instrument]”. It is not that the worker is viewed as an animal, but that both are viewed as instruments, or commodities. As *BoB* points out, “The basis of working class concern about animals is... empathy arising from a shared condition as beasts of burden”.

Individual sectors of capitalism wax and wane over time in terms of their strategic importance to the whole—all commodities are equal, but some are more equal than others. With the significant exception of biotechnology, agriculture and animal businesses have the feel of a peripheral backwater, ‘sunset industries’, not really where the action is—in the ‘developed’ nations, at least. All eyes are presently fixed upon the virtual, and if you listened to the delirious cheerleaders of the “Information Revolution,” you could be forgiven for thinking that we’d achieved ‘lift-off’ from fundamental material needs such as food, shelter, warmth, etc. (Blair’s favourite pundit Charles Leadbeater calls it “living on thin air”), and that these needs were in some way ‘*passe*’. Foolish as this may be, it does reflect something substantial: our rulers’ best hopes for the future of capitalism. As such it may currently be the most important arena—the new linchpin—in which to contest that future (just don’t ask me how!)

**"The basis of working class concern about animals is empathy arising from a shared condition as beasts of burden".**

Although I’m not about to start a campaign for vegetable rights, it is noticeable that *BoB* focuses overwhelmingly on the plight of animals. Although practically it is impossible to separate out the two (e.g. plants are cultivated as animal feed, animal habitat is destroyed for arable farming), questions to do with plants, habitat and an ecological sensibility rarely rear their awkward heads. In this respect, it suffers from the (curiously anthropocentric?) blind spot of much animal rights thinking—the hierarchy of compassion, moving down from primates and other mammals, based on a creature’s proximity to us, whether it has a recognisable face and eyes, and so on. (So respect is due to the Crustacean Liberation Front!) This has the unfortunate effect of excluding plants, as well as invertebrates (and thus the great mass of the natural world) from consideration. As a fully

paid up hounious junkie myself, I’m reluctant to raise the old vegan-baiting question of soya, but... the fact that the brilliant bean is currently laying waste to Amazonia suggests a dire need for a critique of farming and land use/distribution that encompasses more than

just the presence of animals.<sup>5</sup>

*BoB* talks of the rebels and revolutionaries throughout history “who have fought for their own liberation and that of other human beings whilst also denouncing the abuse of animals.” It also quotes *Do or Die No.5*’s comment that “the fact that people are moved to confront the state by the suffering of animals at least gives us hope that... [they] are not completely alienated”. I’m not so sure—I think animal rights can spring from an understandable, quite profound disillusionment with humanity, even from misanthropy (speaking as an ex(?)misanthrope). Similarly, “denouncing the abuse of animals” need not always lead people to fight “for their own liberation and that of other[s]” (I am reminded of the campaign to free caged prison birds—often the prisoners’ only comfort—while leaving the prisoners incarcerated.)

To put the pessimistic spin on it, people are so atomised that some can only be moved to outrage at another species’ misfortunes. In a kind of abdication of the messy human sphere for the less troublesome ‘natural’ world. (This can apply as much to ecological struggles.) It’s a form of transference: like the ‘unborn child’, animals are innocent or blameless paragons (more ‘acted upon’ than ‘acting’), whereas humanity is irredeemably tainted—or at least deeply ambivalent. Therefore they can serve very well as a repository onto which we project our ideals and



discontents. This may, in part, explain the amazingly broad spectrum of people on animal rights demos—the bizarre (and positive) spectacle of blue-rinse 'ALF grannies' mixing happily with 'green-rinse' spiky top anarchos. It may also explain the reactionary streak in animal rights (sometimes expressed as anti-abortion, opposition to halal meat, etc.), with slime such as John Aspinall, Alan Clarke and—I'm sorry to say—Brightie Bardot. I suspect that opposition to animal abuse can quite comfortably remain as a 'single issue' (albeit a very vehement one)—indeed that for some its appeal is that it doesn't confront them with too many difficult questions about themselves, humanity and the way the world is organised. (Hence foul animal abuse is frequently explained in terms of 'moral failures' on the part of the abusers, such as sadism, being an inbred bumpkin, or as resulting from a nebulous 'greed'.) The Lynx anti-fur campaign, for instance, was popular partly because it's easy to renounce a commodity you're never likely to make use of anyway.

So, might we make our way back to concern for humanity via concern for animals? I'm not totally convinced.

On a more positive note, *BoB* is right to say that the act of liberating animals from farms and laboratories "directly confronts the logic of capital, abolishing their status as products, commodities and raw materials by reinstating them as living beings outside of the system of production and exchange."<sup>6</sup> By uncovering the torment that lies behind one category of product, and beginning to appreciate ways in which animal exploitation intersects with other underpinning interests, campaigners may then begin to revolt against 'products' more generally. What the McLibel campaign did with the Image of Ronald McDonald's face quite literally unmasked the machinery behind

Opposition to animal abuse can quite comfortably remain as a 'single issue' (albeit a very vehement one)—indeed for some its appeal is that it doesn't confront them with too many difficult questions about themselves, humanity and the way the world is organised.

the commodity in this way. Likewise, the activity of hunt sabs challenges the control exercised by the rural elite over the countryside, as well as developing valuable practical techniques that can be utilised in other situations. Finally, *BoB* argues that the experiences of the 1995 movement against live exports "posed fundamental questions for those involved about the role of the state". I remember one pillar of the community Neighbourhood Watch type in Shoreham who returned medals he had received from the police in disgust at their behaviour on his doorstep.

All of this is 'praxis': learning through doing, the School of Hard Knocks—or "Animating Liberals", as the saying used to go. However, could such praxis not result from practically any struggle? Refusing the commodity, property rights and the state all seem to be outcomes of the process, or form, of the struggle, rather than of its specific content: the treatment of animals. Are animals incidental to the wider social insights to be gained from animal liberation?

*Beasts of Burden* is a very stimulating and worthwhile publication. Unfortunately at the end of it I am left with the conclusion that animal liberation needs communism more than communism needs animal liberation. But does this really matter anyway? Essentially, animal liberation is founded upon forgotten empathy for other beings, the natural impulse towards solidarity—and that in itself is worth fighting for. ★

## Notes

- 1) See the entries for 'Cattle' and 'Chattel' in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume 1 (1965).
- 2) 'The Question of Agriculture' in *Fifth Estate*, Spring 1989, p.36. See also *Neanderthals, Bandits and Farmers—How Agriculture Really Began* by Colin Tudge (Weldenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), pp.13-14.
- 3) *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers and Defenders of the Amazon* by Susanna Hocht and Alexander Cockburn (Verso, 1989), p.29—see also p.38.
- 4) Colin Tudge, pp.21-24. See also in *Search of the Noble Savage*. Transcript of BBC Horizon programme 27/1/92, pp.5-8.
- 5) E.g. see 'Seeds of Doom' by Sue Branford and Nicole Faris, *The Guardian*, 19/4/00.
- 6) ...And that, innit.





# Wild Britain

## A Traveller's Guide

by Douglas Botting (Sheldrake Press, London, 1999)

Paperback/224pp/£12.50/ISBN 1-873329-31-8



*Wild Britain* does exactly what it says on the tin: it's an exhaustively researched and beautifully illustrated guide to the best bits of this country, crammed with practical advice on how to escape the brutal tyranny of the teashop theme park. The hills are alive with the sound of Gore-Tex—but Douglas Botting is smarter than the average 'peak freak', making this more than just a guide book. It's garnished with playful anecdotes from his years of roaming the British outback, a wealth of direct experience which leads him to reflect on what 'wildness' means in our apparently inimical setting.

This quality of wildness is almost as hard to pin down as Earth First!'s political philosophy, and defining it is a bit like trying to analyse humour, flattening that which you seek to understand. Its very elusiveness could be seen as an essential part of what makes a particular place or time 'wild'. Thankfully, its intoxicating tang can be tasted in even the tamest and most unlikely of settings, not just on highest mountaintop or in deepest forest. You just have to try hard enough, know how to look, or get lucky. My hometown was undoubtedly 'wild' the morning after the Great Storm of 1987. Nature had paid a terrifying and humbling visit, leaving its calling card: whole rows of cars smashed to smithereens by fallen trees, stretching on up the quiet streets where I delivered papers. School was definitely out for the day—we'd been slipped an emphatic sick note by Mother Nature.

Writing in the context of our pretty subdued countryside, Botting has a stab at a broad definition. A wild place is "a part of the planet

where living things can find a natural refuge from the influence of modern industrial society... a wild place is for wild life as well as... the wild traveller: the hill walker, backpacker, bird-watcher, nature lover, explorer, nomad, loner, mystic, masochist, aficionado of the great outdoors, or permutations of all these things." A place to be-wildered, perhaps... Sampling *Wild Britain*, you marvel at the variety and number of such natural refuges, at the fact that so much still endures despite "40,000 years of hunting, clearing, draining and ploughing." Apparently these islands are one of the most geologically diverse regions on earth, thereby brimming over with a correspondingly rich range of characteristic landscapes. I would also venture to suggest that, for all the countless ways in which we have trashed and degraded this land, thousands of years of human habitation may have served to deepen this local distinctiveness. (Although you could well argue that these 'managed' landscapes are no more than choices from the desert menu.)

As a Southern soft lad who recently chickened out of both Cadair Idris and Snowdon, I may not be best qualified to offer insights into *Wild Britain*—although it's reassuring to see that even hardened hill-walker Douglas Botting admits to getting horribly lost in the New Forest. But I like to think that there is a small teasing trace of what these daunting peaks can offer, even in the milder country that is my usual stamping ground. In a tangled river valley on Dartmoor, apparently unvisited for decades—though just off the track—where I fully expected to see a pterodactyl soar by



any minute. In Roeburndale, site of the 1995 Earth First! Gathering, teetering on boulders in midstream as I followed the heron, in my element and 'dancing' with the river, and an owl wooshed noiseless inches past me. In secret, secluded downland coombes, inexplicably transported though still in the frantic heart of the South East of England. In a host of unique and precious places.

Like all the best books, *Wild Britain* leaves you raring to go, and is a pleasure to dip into even for the armchair explorer. Its travel tips and natural history information are useful, but it is the enjoyable and highly personal accounts that really bring the places they describe to life. I've found some errors even on a cursory skim-through, and I'm not sure how much it has actually been updated from the 1992 edition—but these are trivial complaints. Maybe I'm a coward, or a parochial stick-in-the-mud, but on the strength of this I don't feel any need to go 'over the water' just yet. There's so much yet to be discovered. "Farther up and farther in!" as they say in Narnia. The thrill of the hill, the coup of a view, beckons. See you on St. Kilda!★

## NATIONAL PARKS OF ENGLAND AND WALES



## Cultures of Resistance

(Published by [rachred57@hotmail.com](mailto:rachred57@hotmail.com))

Paperback/110pp/£3.00/No ISBN



In late 1999 an art exhibition with a difference took place at a squatted venue near Tower Bridge in London. *Cultures of Resistance* brought together political artists and performers for a week long celebration of collective creativity. The event was enjoyed so much that a second exhibition—*Cultures of Persistence*—took

place in early January 2000.

This beautifully put together book describes itself as "a collection of the art and inspirations that went into the space at Tower Bridge Road. It also reaches broader into different aspects of underground culture which are all, at the end of the day, interconnected." I think this is why this book is so striking and so unusual. It reminds us of the oft forgotten creative side of our struggles, whilst situating it in a highly politicised context, blurring the boundaries between direct action and art.

I particularly liked the feature 'Poetic Terrorism' with its rallying cry of, "Dress up. Leave a false

name. Be legendary. The best PT is against the law but don't get caught. Art as crime. Crime as art."

The book commences with an explanation of how the exhibitions came about, and how the squatted venue became "a lively place in which to express ourselves." The rest of the book features contributions from the eclectic range of 'artists' whose works graced the walls (floors and ceiling) of 168 Tower Bridge Road.

From cartoons on the Terrorism Bill and silhouette paintings of crowd scenes, through to Sheela-Na-Gigs, poetry and montages—this book has it all! The wider political context is also included with articles on November 30th in Seattle and Mayday's guerrilla gardening, as well as a piece on the gentrification of Brixton—the backdrop to a number of contributions from the South London squatting scene.

The book also features some enlightening contributions from those politicising the subject of art. From the Molotov Organisation's banana attacks at galleries—under the slogan "Whatever it is... We're against it"—to a 'red dot' attack on an exhibition in Amsterdam. These people are going for the heart of the artistic establishment!

All in all this is a fascinating little book. I love the personalisation of the articles and the way you'd never guess what's on the next page.★



# Guy Debord

by Anselm Jappe

(English translation by University of California Press, London, 1999)

Paperback/188pp/£11.50/ISBN 0-520-21205-3

During the events of May 1968 in France, the Situationists claimed (with a degree of justification) that their ideas were in everybody's heads. In the 'revolutionary/direct-action' milieu it would probably be true to say that ideas about the Situationists are in most peoples' heads—mostly that they wrote obscure, incomprehensible books and had something to do with the worker and student revolts in France; the flip side of that attitude being an interest or knowledge that sometimes borders on obsession. The Situationist International (SI)—of which Debord was one of the founders, and arguably its most lastingly important theorist, has made an extremely important contribution to revolutionary theory in the last thirty years. Concepts such as the 'Spectacle' and their incisive analyses of the alienation and misery present in life and work in affluent capitalist society, as well as the role played by revolutionaries (and those who claim to be) have if anything become more relevant as time has passed. They deserve to be read and understood by as many people as possible and not to be left in the hands of a few 'specialists'. As Jappe points out, they are one of the few political groups from their time not to have disappeared into historical oblivion; "...it is clear that the Situationists were the only people at that time to develop a theory and to a lesser extent a practice whose interest is not merely historiographical but remains a potential relevance today." (p.81) I think that it's something of an overstatement to say they were the only group; for example the autonomia movement in Italy was extremely important theoretically and even more so practically. In that, as with the SI, its historical moment has passed, there is plenty to be salvaged and reworked for the present situation.

Situationist ideas are still used all over the place; in texts, articles and agit-prop by radical groups as well as by an ever increasing army of academics, commentators and 'theorists' who demonstrably have nothing useful to say, but have nevertheless created a minor publishing industry which feeds on the SI (and has done so ever since its disbanding in 1972). They have sought to reduce the SI and its principal theorists to the status of cultural or artistic avant-gardists, precursors of punk or proto-post modernists; conveniently forgetting that the central point of their project was nothing less than total social revolution. Jappe is not totally separate in that he seems to be an academic of sorts, and his book



occupies a slightly contradictory position in that it is both part of the SI 'industry' and against it at the same time. However it stands out by giving due recognition to those parts of the SI's theory which others of his type appear to find hard to stomach—the centrality of class struggle for example.

For anyone wanting to get to grips with Debord and the SI, Jappe's book is an excellent place to start. Whilst I would hesitate to say that there is a single 'correct' way of interpreting the SI, it seems clear that some versions are in keeping with the way it was intended to be understood, whereas others try to fit it into political and cultural currents that are blatantly incompatible. Fortunately Jappe's book falls into the first category; it is far superior to the recent woeful effort by Stewart Home and the slightly better one by Sadie Plant,<sup>1</sup> as well as the no doubt well-intentioned but inadequate biography of Debord by Len Bracken.<sup>2</sup> The number of useful books and analyses of the SI, its development, its place in history and its ongoing influence and relevance (or at least those which are available in English) can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. Of the original texts (which should definitely be read first-hand if you're interested), Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is the most important, but *The Revolution of Everyday Life* by Raoul Vaneigem is more widely read because of its more accessible style. In addition



around a third of the articles from the journal *Internationale Situationiste* are collected in the *Situationist International Anthology*<sup>3</sup> and are well worth looking at.

Jappe's book isn't really a biography in the usual sense of the word; he includes some biographical detail as it relates to Debord's theory and practice, but avoids going over ground that has been pretty well trodden in other books (Bracken's for example). If you're looking for salacious or amusing anecdotes then this isn't the book for you.

Jappe successfully gets to grips with the content of Debord's and the SI's activity in a way that is accessible and doesn't require a vast amount of prior knowledge or an extensive vocabulary of obscure jargon in order to understand it. Debord has got a somewhat undeserved reputation for having an impenetrable and complex writing style—a myth which Jappe goes a long way towards refuting by examining the major concepts in *Society of the Spectacle* and other works, and putting them in the context of a wider historical basis and in terms of the SI as a whole.

Later and less well-known works such as *Comments on Society of the Spectacle* as well as others which have yet to be translated into English are also covered. There is an interesting section on Debord's films which are hardly ever seen and are unavailable in English in screen form, although some scripts have been translated.

Jappe could be criticised for focusing on Debord and thereby personalising a political group. However he manages to avoid the major pitfall for writers coming from a revolutionary perspective—adopting the position of a loyal follower (those who became known in the 1970s as 'pro-Situs') of a static set of 'holy' ideas that can't be questioned, instead of accepting that these ideas and practices need to be superseded where necessary, just as they superseded previous revolutionary theory. Passive worship of Debord as an iconic figure has always been part of the 'pro-Situ' scene. To a great extent he was the SI, so concentrating on his contribution is understandable, even if it does tend to feed into the creation of a personality cult, "...threatening to transform him into a pop idol, a kind of Che Guevara for the more refined taste." (p.167) A problem that Jappe recognises even though he is in some way part of it.

Now that he is safely dead Debord is being gradually resurrected as an elegant stylist and avant garde artist by the cultural and academic circles that he avoided and mocked, and who maintained a 'conspiracy of silence' about him while he was alive. In this way it becomes possible to assimilate both Debord and the SI back into the fold of respectability, to portray them as politicised artists who made a valuable if unorthodox

contribution to society in their 'artistic phase' and then to; "...take cover behind vague generalities when it comes to characterising the Situationists' critique of society, or explaining its pertinence (to which full lip service is nonetheless paid.)" (p.161)

Radical groups who only emphasise the aspects of the SI which relate to 'art', 'play' and poetry—i.e. those most closely associated with Raoul Vaneigem, the "unhappy theoretician of an art of living"<sup>4</sup>—are almost as bad. The SI at its best understood and incorporated the need for play, desire and creativity within the context of revolutionary class struggle—without that context all that's left is an empty pretension and individualism that's really part of this society, not against it.

Jappe doesn't really have any concrete suggestions for the present or future practical relevance of the SI, but as has been pointed out elsewhere, "The continued attempts by organised knowledge either to dismiss or co-opt the SI, itself provides evidence of the enduring antagonism of their ideas, as does the conscious echo of their approach in a number of contemporary struggles."<sup>5</sup>

In 1967 the French academic Henry Lefebvre, who previously had been close to the SI, asked if "they really imagine that one fine day or some decisive evening people will look at each other and say, "Enough! We are fed up with working and being bored. Let's put an end to this!" Maybe it happened once, at dawn on 18 March 1871, [the beginning of the Paris Commune] but that particular set of circumstances can never recur." (p.101) Words he no doubt regretted a year later; as Jappe points out, "Even though another May 1968 has not yet occurred, the fact remains that the conditions which occasioned the first have not disappeared, and should the day come when peoples' desire to control their own lives drives once again into the streets, not a few of the SI's precepts will surely be recalled." (p.101)★

## Notes

- 1) *What is Situationism?: A Reader* edited by Stuart Home (AK Press, Edinburgh, 1996) and *The Most Radical Gesture—The Situationist International in a Post-Modern Age* by Sadie Plant (Routledge, London, 1992). Plant's book is well meant but remains within the realm of cultural studies. Home's book contains two worthwhile pieces, one being Jean Barrot's 'Critique of the Situationist International' the other one being 'The End of Music' by Dave and Stuart Wise. Jappe seems not to like Barrot, but I think it's an excellent text, a little bit harsh maybe and not as accessible as Jappe, but well worth reading nonetheless. The rest of the book isn't worth bothering with; Home's contribution being nothing but a series of snide attacks on the contributors and the SI—even the title is a knowing provocation.
- 2) *Guy Debord—Revolutionary* by Len Bracken (Feral House, USA, 1997)
- 3) *Situationist International Anthology* translated and edited by Ken Knabb (Bureau of Public Secrets, USA, 1981)
- 4) 'Critique of the Situationist International' by Jean Barrot, p.24 in *What is Situationism?: A Reader*.
- 5) 'Whatever happened to the Situationists?' in *Aufheben*, No.6, Autumn 1997, p.48.



# Elements of Refusal

by John Zerzan

(Second Edition, 1999 by CAL Press/Paleo Editions, POB 1446, Columbia, MO 65205, USA.)  
Paperback/308pp/\$14.95/  
ISBN 1-890532-01-0

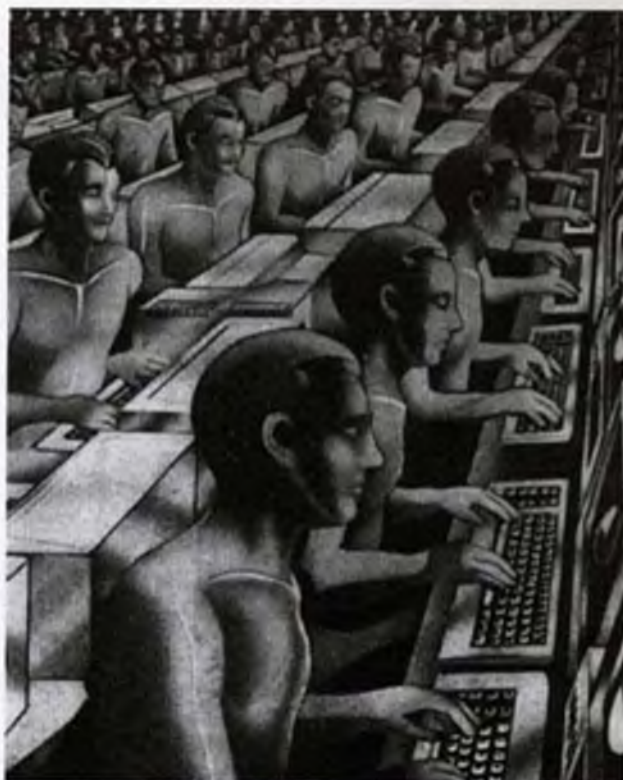
"They want to start a conflagration from these little brushfires," an FBI officer said, referring to one gang from Eugene, Oregon, prominent in the Seattle confrontations. "They are a strange bunch, no one really knows who they are. We call them the Forces of Darkness."—from the UK newspaper the *Evening Standard*, December 1st 1999.

It's not surprising that in the wake of recent global uprisings this stropy author and activist from the US town of Eugene in Oregon has become a focus for State and media attention. When black clad anarchists from his community in the Pacific Northwest started regularly fighting with cops, engaging in acts of property destruction and then eloquently articulating their opposition to the techno-industrial totality people took notice. And, much to his dismay, Zerzan would be described as the leader of these "Forces of Darkness". Well, it's a lot more complicated than that...

Zerzan has been instigating insurrection for decades. Never one to shy away from a debate, he's taken on local government, business, industry and reform-minded activists face-to-face in his own community; do-gooder leftists, class war anarchists, union goons, fluffy Earth First!ers and social ecologists in the pages of the alternative press; and sophist academics and other ineffectual post-modern intellectuals in his many books and pamphlets. As a result, his radical rhetoric and real commitment to turning theory into practice stands out.

For several years now Zerzan has been a contributing editor to *Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed*, and has become a leading proponent of the theoretical orientation known as anarcho-primitivism. Like his friend Ted Kaczynski, Zerzan is a revolutionary intellectual, and you can't separate the two terms and do justice to their work. They are revolutionaries and intellectuals. Strong, articulate and passionate, yet self-effacing in person, Zerzan calls to mind the image of an angry professor who might have just been fired from his job at university because he was just too good at subverting the dominant paradigm.

In *Elements of Refusal*, the first major collection of his essays, originally published in 1988, Zerzan outlines the framework of his cogent and powerful critiques of civilisation, Leftist political thought and contemporary culture. Written in a distinctly



academic yet readable style, the book induces the reader to question not just authority, but also the very foundations society is built on. Zerzan has investigated pre-history and history in order to ascertain the roots of our estrangement from one another and the natural world. It is a daunting task, potentially full of political pitfalls. He constructs an argument that is often caricatured as calling for a return to the stone age, but by sheer force of common sense he succeeds in making a compelling case not for going back, but for moving forward, away from technological society and towards a future primitive. In contrast to the more 'woo-woo' and misanthropic aspects of the philosophy of deep ecology that has dominated some of the radical ecology scene in the US, Zerzan's anarcho-primitivist perspective has a distinct class consciousness. In his view, it's not humans in general who are responsible for social oppression and destructive ecological practices, but the civilising impulses of a certain dominant elite.

## The Origins

The book begins at the beginning by reviewing what is known about the origins of time, language, numbers, art and agriculture. These five essays first appeared as articles in *Fifth Estate* and are now classics, describing in rich detail how the taken-for-granted attitudes regarding the benefits of these phenomena have insidiously infected our consciousness.

In the first essay, Zerzan takes the reader on a guided tour of the history of time—that ubiquitous



concept that alienates us from the here and now and is one of the earliest hallmarks of hierarchical social structures. We see it emerging in the calenderical stelae of the ancient Maya and in the advent of the seven-day week in civilisations of the pre-Christian Middle and Near East. Zerzan systematically traces the idea through to its contemporary manifestation—9 to 5 Western culture—showing how we all ended up as slaves to the clock—with our very subsistence tied to the hours we work in a week.

The second essay introduces the study of linguistics. A central theme in all Zerzan's theoretical work is a critique of symbolic representation, with language as the most omnipresent form. He is unwilling to accept that language was an inevitable outgrowth of human evolution, but sees in its development one of the earliest expressions of the will to dominate. The fact that he is able to cite examples of non-articulated (verbally represented) thought in action, e.g. playing chess, using tools, composing music, adds credibility to this argument. He writes, "The process of transforming all direct experience into the supreme symbolic expression, language, monopolises life... As the paradigm of ideology, language stands behind all of the massive legitimisation necessary to hold civilisation together." As it is clear the rhetoric of politicians and the marketing strategies employed in our consumer culture are utterly dependent on the ability to manipulate through the sophisticated use of language, as an essential element of oppression, language itself is certainly deserving of his radical critique. The third essay concerns mathematics, observing that, "Human helplessness seems to be directly proportional to mathematical technology's domination over nature...". Mathematics has been one of the primary forces driving a now out-of-control technological society to the brink of social and ecological catastrophe; without it, chemistry and biotechnology wouldn't exist, nor would engineering or the nuclear industry. Building on the idea that symbolic representation is at the root of unequalitarian, ecologically destructive social relations he shows how representation finds its most abstract expression in numbers. Inherently reductionist and mechanistic, the world of numbers is cold and calculating. Not recognising how this translates into the realm of social relationships, Zerzan believes, may doom us all to a future where the boundaries

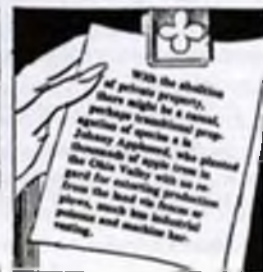
between man and machine become increasingly blurred.

The fourth essay looks at art as "...[P]art of the symbolic matrix of estranged social life." Today's culture is a commodity, and Zerzan argues that art is the star commodity in a society saturated by images distancing us from what is real. While most elements in the counter-culture like to argue the artistic aesthetic experience somehow offers a more authentic and immediate appreciation of such venerable entities as truth and beauty, Zerzan disagrees. His detailed analysis of how art turns subject into object, beginning with the first ritual representations in art by the first cultural specialists, the shamans, undermines the idea of art as a benign form of individualistic expression and communication.

The fifth and final origins essay undertakes a global investigation of the advent of domestication. In the imperialist ideology of progress, the practice of agriculture is consistently depicted as one of humankind's "great evolutionary leaps forward." The idea is that through domestication, primitive man was able to conquer nature, thus securing the surplus food production that would facilitate the rise of civilisations—ostensibly the epitome of human cultural achievement. Again, Zerzan begs to differ, stating that, "Agriculture has been and remains a 'catastrophe' at all levels, the one which underpins the entire material and spiritual culture of alienation now destroying us", and argues that "liberation is impossible without its dissolution." Mainstream archaeological theory firmly supports Zerzan's contention that the domestication of plant and animal species led to the domestication of the human species. Hunter-gatherers, with their subsistence strategies geared toward procurement rather than production, living life within the bounds of nature rather than seeking to control it, exhibit egalitarian social relations. With the beginning of agricultural and pastoralist modes of production, we see the will to dominate nature and other humans emerge. All agricultural societies develop hierarchical (patriarchal) social structures resulting in the ideological control of the many by the few.

In the origins essays, Zerzan makes use of a great deal of anthropological and archaeological theory. What makes his work different from

## Nothing Less Than Totality





establishment thought in these disciplines is that it is relevant to the situation we all now encounter in the real world. For Zerzan, the past's role in the present is one of delegitimising domination and engendering resistance. Understanding how things came to be the way they are now is a necessary first step in destroying the contemporary power relationships that have a hold over our lives. Despite this Zerzan effectively resists engaging in an overly romantic depiction of the primitive. While in some senses it may well be a harsh life in the pre-civilised 'wild', it is also one where the dignity and autonomy of all species is valued; conformity, exploitation and mass society is devalued, and it therefore represents the closest humans have come to actualising social and ecological harmony.

## The Resistance in Context

The second part of *Elements of Refusal* contains eleven essays that address the character of the resistance he played a part in defining. Here Zerzan recounts the history of the international labour movement that once held so much revolutionary promise, but that he personally witnessed degenerate into a single-issue politics that denied the destructive influence of the totality of technological society.

The essay 'Who Killed Ned Ludd?' explains why the Luddites "rise and defeat was of such great importance to the subsequent course of modern society." In the pre-Luddite days the people openly hated their rulers, but it would be up to the Luddites to manifest the hatred the working class felt towards the industrial process that had made them slaves. They demonstrated their rebellion through spontaneous acts of sabotage that were "seemingly unmediated by ideology." Then the unions, ideological entities themselves, came to supersede their action with mediation and compromise, becoming just another force in the domestication of human beings.

Zerzan's real contribution is a thorough and insightful critique of leftist theory and practice. The essay 'The Practical Marx' is a must read for anyone whose knowledge of Marx has come through sycophantic socialist sources; whilst 'Unionism in America' concentrates on the evolution of the collusion of what were supposed to be two opposing entities—capitalist employers and the disenfranchised workers. Zerzan began his activist career as a union organiser and his analysis, especially in 'Organised Labour vs. The Revolt Against Work' smacks of the disillusionment that one who had devoted so much time, energy and hope in the liberatory potential of such an enterprise would justifiably feel upon its failure. The reader can follow the logic of Zerzan's activist progression from union organiser to one of the very earliest proponents of the anti-work position.

These essays represent much more than just sour grapes, they offer a richly detailed insiders historical overview of class war politics that even any avowed workerist would be hard-pressed to find fault with.

## Where We're at Now

Zerzan concludes the work by offering his observations on contemporary culture. Since *Elements of Refusal* was first published in the 80s Zerzan admits in the 'Preface to the Second Edition' that this section is the most dated. Nevertheless, there are valuable lessons to be learned by reading these essays. 'The Promise of the 80s', 'The 80s So far' and 'Present Day Banalities' highlight evidence of the erosion of belief in society's dominant attitudes and the on-rushing impoverishment of everyday life. The last few pages of the book contain reprints of some incredibly clever and thought-provoking agit-prop that Zerzan was producing with his friends in the 80s and was compiled in a booklet under the title *Adventures in Subversion*. I recently ran across several of these flyers and posters in a 1990 edition of the Loompanics catalogue and they have lost none of their power as anti-authoritarian propaganda.

As a reviewer I must confess that Zerzan is perhaps my favourite contemporary theorist and author. All of his work is ground breaking in its originality and analytical potency. It is difficult for me to offer any criticisms of this book because I believe that any shortcomings it might have are more than compensated for by the important information it conveys and the astuteness of the critique. Some people might find the copious citations and footnotes distracting, but don't let them deter you. Zerzan uses them more as suggestions for further readings rather than appeals to academic authority, and anyone who wants to find out exactly what is up with the anti-civilisation currents in the ecological resistance movement would do well to follow them up.

In a new preface he dedicates this edition to the Unabomber stating, "I hope that aspects of *Elements of Refusal* may be useful to those who are appalled by the nightmare we face, and who are determined not to go along." We all now live in a complex matrix of corrupt cultural constructions that Zerzan reveals for what they really are—sources of alienation, suffering, domination and discontent that must be destroyed. Rather than being a "force of darkness" Zerzan is a source of light, articulating non-negotiable dissent and promoting revolutionary social change by illustrating how contemporary society is the product of thousands of years of social struggles and complex technological changes. His work illuminates by fanning the flames of resistance. ★



# On Organisation

In This World We Must Leave and Other Essays

by Jacques Camatte

(Autonomedia, New York, USA, 1995)

Paperback/256pp/£5.95/ISBN 1-57027-020-1

Originally published in the French journal *Invariance* (Annee V, Serie II, No.2), 'On Organisation' is an open letter written in 1969 by Jacques Camatte and Gianni Collu to explain why they felt revolutionaries had to reject the form of political groups and organisations that had normally been their home. Camatte is part of a tradition of left communism that has existed alongside, and fiercely criticised, the better known tendencies of Leninism and Trotskyism, arguing that the ideas that are usually passed off as communist or Marxist are in fact neither. Being an offspring of Marxism however, the useful criticisms and analyses that this tradition has to offer are usually filled with so much jargon and academic language that they end up being ignored, which is in many ways a shame. *This World We Must Leave*, as one example, has many challenging ideas for those prepared to make the effort.

The essence of their argument in 'On Organisation' is that political groups, whether large or small, formal or informal, hierarchical or not, can only be a hindrance to revolutionary developments. For Camatte "capitalism is the triumph of the organisation, and the form the organisation takes is the gang." (p.30) At all levels of society the whole social fabric is based on competing organisations and rackets, and with the state as "a gang mediating between different gangs and between the total capital and particular capitals." (p.25) Even groups which aim to go beyond this society become trapped by it, acting as just another gang or racket. Groups and gangs tend to hide the existence of their ruling cliques (formal or informal) to appear more attractive to outsiders, and try to distinguish themselves from all the similar rackets around. "Once within the gang (or any other type of business) the individual is tied to it by all the psychological dependencies of capitalist society". (p.27)

The gang then vampirizes their creative abilities and suppresses their individuality in the name of an illusory community, and "even in those groups that want to escape the social givens the gang mechanism nevertheless tends to prevail because of the different degrees of theoretical development among the members. The inability to question theoretical questions independently leads the individual to take refuge behind the authority of another member who becomes, objectively, a leader, or behind the group entity, which becomes a gang." (p.27)

For Camatte

it is also impossible for such groups to avoid separating themselves from those around them as, "to belong in order to exclude, that is the internal dynamic of the gang." (p.28)

Nor can they avoid substituting themselves for the proletariat, seeing themselves instead as the agents of change or the bringers of 'true consciousness'. Camatte argues that capital has by now managed to establish its real domination, by absorbing and assimilating the proletariat, which is the only movement which could potentially challenge its power. He believes that this unity is fragile and can be destroyed by a crisis, possibly opening the way to a movement towards communism, but in the meantime no genuinely revolutionary organisation can exist and "all forms of working class political organisation have disappeared. In their place, gangs confront one another in an obscene competition, veritable rackets rivalling each other in what they peddle but identical in their essence." (p.26)

So where does this leave us in terms of what people who identify as revolutionaries can actually do? Camatte's answer is firstly that "the critique of capital ought to be, therefore, a critique of the racket in all its forms; of capital as social organism... The theory which criticises the racket cannot reproduce it. The consequence of this is the refusal of all group life; it's either this or the illusion of community... A group can in no way pretend to realise community without taking the place of the proletariat, which alone can do it". (p.32) Instead he argues that revolutionaries can only keep up loose networks of personal contacts, developing theory where possible. He believes that real change will only come as a result of a crisis in capitalism that will be the spark for a general movement towards communism. Certainly revolutionaries can and should get stuck into such opportunities, but for Camatte it is worse than useless to engage in "petty activism" in the meantime. ★





# The Zapatistas

## A Rough Guide

(Published by Chiapaslink, PO Box 79, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB, UK)  
Paperback/96pp/£5.00 and £1.50 postage/ISBN 0-907367-99-2

For all those up in arms about *Do or Die* endorsing eco-tourism, calm down. This book is not part of the official *Rough Guide* series. It was written by people from various British ecological and social direct action groups who went to Mexico in 1998, wanting to observe and support the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. This book is one of the outcomes of their trip, and is intended to "educate, depress, inspire, and anger the reader, while suggesting what we can individually and collectively do to change things". In my totally unbiased opinion, I believe that it does all of the above and more. It gives an inspiring account of the Zapatista uprising, whilst at the same time providing vital practical advice on how to help. This is done by drawing on written and photographic accounts of the uprising from people who have spent time in Zapatista communities, bringing a much needed personal touch to the book, which is absent from many other dry political histories and critiques of the Zapatistas.

The first chapter gives a condensed history of events in Mexico leading up to the initial Zapatista uprising in 1994, and what has happened up to the present day. For those who don't know the background to our favourite Central American revolutionaries, here is a brief outline of their struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Chiapas is the southernmost state of Mexico. It borders Guatemala, and is also the poorest state, despite being one of the richest in natural resources. There has been a long history of oppression of the indigenous population of Chiapas, stretching back 500 years to the Spanish invasion. Rich landowners controlled vast areas of the state, forcing the locals to work as virtual slaves, many of them crippled by debts to their landlords. Poverty was rife, infant mortality was over 50% in some of the more remote communities, alcoholism and domestic violence were common, and there were thousands of refugees who had been displaced from elsewhere in Mexico, or who had fled the civil war in Guatemala. On January 1st 1994, the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect in Mexico, armed rebels calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) took over 4 towns in Chiapas, calling for land reform and greater autonomy for indigenous peoples. After 12 days of fighting, and in the face of massive public support for the Zapatistas, the government called a cease-fire and peace talks began. However, the government did



not agree to the Zapatistas' demands, and the proposals that were taken back to the Zapatista communities were rejected after a lengthy consultation period. During this time the Zapatistas began occupying properties and ranches belonging to wealthy landowners, and by mid-1995 over 1,500 properties totalling 90,000 hectares had been occupied. To this day there are 32 Zapatista municipalities, covering nearly a third of Chiapas, which are effectively autonomous from the Mexican state, and are run collectively by the local communities. The Zapatistas' way of running their communities is examined, with special emphasis on education and the womens' revolutionary law that confronts the patriarchal machismo of Mexican society.

In 1995 the government launched a massive offensive against the Zapatista communities, forcing over 5,000 villagers to flee into the mountains. The army have maintained a massive presence ever since, with over 70,000 troops (a third of the whole Mexican army) now based in Chiapas. To help prevent the army from oppressing the indigenous population, the Zapatistas set up 'peace camps' in their communities, where foreign observers record any human rights violations, and their presence means that army incursions or massacres are much less likely to happen. Later negotiations with the government produced the San Andrés accords, promising greater indigenous rights, which the Zapatistas accepted, but the government have still failed to implement. The situation remains tense with the possibility of full-scale war erupting if the army tries to reclaim the communities by force. Therefore they are in constant need of support both from people travelling to the area and doing solidarity work at home.



Later sections of the book deal with practical things we can do to help the Zapatistas. In section 2 the relevance of the struggle in Chiapas to our struggles is discussed, as well as the various forms of solidarity that we can do in our own countries. These include: prisoner support, raising money and awareness through talks and events, and taking direct action against representatives of the Mexican state and the companies involved. However, the most direct (and I would argue the most fulfilling) way of supporting the Zapatista struggle is actually going out to Chiapas and getting involved in practical support work in their communities. There are various things you can do including: human rights observation work, installing irrigation projects, as well as less predictable things like getting a sports team together to play in tournaments against Zapatista teams (football teams from Europe have been out there on 2 separate occasions, and both were a great success in the communities—see *Do or Die* No.8, pp.248-249). This book tells you in a detailed way what to do before you go, what you will need to take with you, and how to continue support for their struggle once you get back home. Finally, there is a section at the end that lists contact addresses for organisations involved in support work, further reading, and useful web-site addresses and e-mail news groups that can update you on events as they happen in Chiapas.

The book does not pretend to be definitive, and the authors are the first to admit that they may be viewing the Zapatistas through rose-tinted spectacles. They are not 'perfect' revolutionaries, and there are certain aspects of their theory and practice that some may find difficult to fully endorse (such as their views on religion and the nation state) and some of their demands have attracted accusations of reformism.<sup>2</sup> However, this should not prevent us from supporting their struggle, as they have achieved more in 6 years than most First World struggles could ever hope to achieve and, in contrast to many previous struggles in Latin America, they have avoided sliding into left authoritarianism whilst still remaining a real threat to neo-liberalism.

If you are thinking of going to Chiapas and

working in Zapatista communities (or even doing support work from the comfort of your own armchair), then this book will make it infinitely easier. I strongly suggest you get your grubby hands on a copy and read it thoroughly before you go—as if found with a copy by Mexican immigration you may well find yourself deported! This book is a passionate yet practical guide to helping the Zapatista struggle and it certainly brought back many memories of my experiences in the 'zone' (especially that time when I almost got the ball past that final defender...). Working and living in communities that are effectively autonomous from state interference can be an incredibly inspiring experience, and anything that makes doing this easier should be applauded.★

## Notes

- 1) For a more detailed historical account of the uprising, and of Mexican politics in general, read 'A Commune in Chiapas?' in the forthcoming *Aufheben* issue No.9 (£3.00 including postage from: *Aufheben*, c/o Brighton and Hove Unemployed Workers Centre, 4 Crestway Parade, Hollingdean, Brighton BN1 7BL, UK) which offers an excellent analysis and constructive critique of the Zapatistas by an activist who spent time in Chiapas.
- 2) After the 1994 uprising the Zapatistas became a cause célèbre amongst many left-wing or liberal intellectuals and academics, which provoked a backlash from some ultra-leftist/anarchist circles, and generated subsequent critiques of their movement. These critiques ranged from those that offered positive coverage of the uprising whilst raising genuine concerns over some aspects, to those that were ill-informed denunciations of the whole Zapatista movement, sometimes based on selective interpretations of events, or even questionable factual evidence. For more details of these various articles and a bibliography, see the *Aufheben* article referred to above.



Municipalities in Chiapas with a Zapatista presence marked in gray.



# Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left

## Interviews and Essays 1993-1998

by Murray Bookchin (AK Press, Edinburgh and San Francisco, 1999)

Paperback/352pp/£13.95/ISBN 1-873176-35-X

As Murray Bookchin's latest testament to himself as one of the great thinkers of the 20th Century, this book could be more accurately entitled 'Anachronism, Marxism and the Suture of what's Left'. It is also his latest apoplectic rejoinder to the plentiful and vociferous critics who are apparently trying to secure our illustrious author an early grave.

The Great Debate is one of a number of things that make this book incredibly hard going. At every turn, potentially serious theoretical analysis of the role of technology, the apparent demise and possible future of the Left<sup>1</sup> and the current state of anarchism as a revolutionary social force is undermined by petty swipes at and less petty character assassinations of his critics—a vanguard of white male anti-civilisation anarchists based in the US.<sup>2</sup> He (and his critics) end up engaged in such tedious point scoring—focusing on details of ancient tribal life which professional anthropologists cannot agree on, for example—that much of their argument will be meaningless to most readers.



As befits the irritating pomposity of Bookchin's approach 'Interviews' appear throughout the book, interspersed with essays some of which have appeared in previous works by the same author and some of which are previously unpublished. Although the Interviews do

not read as such (they appear to be sentences put into the mouths of named others with a written reply by Bookchin) they are apparently genuine. However, we are left feeling we have been the victims of a crass attempt to inflate the readers' opinion of Bookchin's significance to the topics under discussion, by pretending that someone other than Bookchin is actually interested in what he has to say. A little unfair perhaps—I do think some of his opinions on the current state of anarchism and the danger of the reduction of radical activity to asocial "juvenile antics" have some validity, but not when presented as the frustrated rallings of an old man against the new.

Bookchin is clearly not an anarchist—except by his own definition. Similarly "lifestyle anarchists" are only lifestyle anarchists by his definition, and no anarcho-primitivists I know aspire to primitivism in anything resembling lifestyle—unless you include not checking your email more than once a week! Amidst the contradictions characteristic of Bookchin's thought when he's not talking about the traditional Left, he unwittingly reveals himself to be just that—a Leftist who was renegade enough once to want to enrich the Left with ideas of non-hierarchical anti-statism rather than truly challenging the faith.

Indeed, the book is largely devoted to detailed discussions of the Left. 'Part One: From Marxism to Anarchism: A Life on the Left' is a cloyingly rose-tinted description of Bookchin's youthful political education and activity. A solid grounding in communism as a member of the Young Communist Party gave way to involvement in the movement for racial equality and, from 1962, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). There is also a strangely vague and naive allusion to his 'anarchist' activity with the odd grandiose claim thrown in, suggesting, for example, that he invented the notion of non-hierarchical society, stating: "I was calling for social changes that were more comprehensive than the abolition of classes and exploitation. I was calling for the abolition of hierarchies as well, of states, not of economic power alone." (p.55) This is characteristic of Bookchin's approach throughout. He was everywhere and everything. Despite the best efforts of a century and more of anarchist and libertarian activity, it was not until Murray came along that anyone really got it.

'Part Two: The New Social Movements' is dominated by his essay 'Whither Anarchism? A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics', a largely pedantic trashing of his critics and their ideas. The





final chapter of the book 'The Future of the Left' describes Bookchin's blueprint for a municipalist utopia: a step-by-step guide to revolution—a programme of city-based, peaceful, bottom-up social reform (this 'inventor' of non-hierarchical society doesn't see that bottom-up is just top-down from another angle). Even if I agree with him that contemporary radical grassroots networks are probably not yet revolutionary in practice, his proposal for a new society does not become revolutionary just because it is practical. The former has the potential to be, and elements of Bookchin's programme such as education and public self-management outside the State may contribute to revolution. His "democratised communities" sound very much like a misguided reworking of Marx's misguided notion of encouraging a capitalist state in order to bring about the overthrow of capitalism.

A hindrance to clarity in the structure and content of this volume of essays is that Bookchin's thinking is clearly encumbered with a sense of his own temporal advance. He is obsessed with history, criticism and the treating of ideas and events within their proper historical context. Is this an underhand way of asking us to treat him within his proper historical context? His notion of historical relativity is extremely dubious—it becomes an apology for anything, and as dubious as his arguments in favour of technology are. Aside from the fact that it is actually keeping him alive (much to the chagrin of Bob Black and Co.) Bookchin proposes that wishing to smash the hegemony of technology is arguing about "our

attitude toward a situation that already exists" (p.286) and that to question whether something should exist when it already does is futile and that we should simply accept that it exists and work out how to use it better! Umm... so because capitalist society exists, there is no point wishing we didn't live in a capitalist society? We just need to learn how to live in a better kind of capitalist society! After all, as he writes of classical Athens, a society cannot rise above itself. Of course, that's not what Bookchin means—he is simply contradicting himself in that typical Bookchin way, hence when talking about the struggle against capitalist society, he writes that "If our capacity to rationally project ourselves succumbs to 'what is', then we become 'realists' in the worst possible sense. We allow our thinking to bog us down in the pragmatics of what exists today." (p.347)

The Issue of technics is a big sticking point with Bookchin's ideas and this seems to place him most firmly in the Leftist tradition rather than with any contemporary anarchist mores. Bookchin believes that technology is great—indeed, he believes technics is the answer to our problems. According to Bookchin, "we could even use genetic engineering... in such a way as to restore "wild" areas." (p.286). That is—and this is the subtext—after the geneticists have fiddled with his age-inducing telomeres and have somehow managed to house his brain in a younger, healthier body. (Then perhaps he and his critics could find a dark alley and enjoy the fist-fight they so obviously need.)

Bookchin is an anachronism—and he is as removed from the movements of today as he is from his glory-days in the earlier part of the twentieth century.

The debate over technics is integral to Bookchin's (tellingly Marxist) attitude to 'first nature'—that there is a non-human world which the human has a moral imperative to control and lead in the right evolutionary direction. How nature can be a 'non-human' world I don't really understand but there you have it. I have a similar problem with a fully biocentrist attitude to the 'human' world. Bookchin writes that our "capacity to go beyond the animal level, to inquire about the future, to alter the world, to use language—all are fundamentally human attributes." For Bookchin though, it doesn't seem to follow that to "inquire about the future" may also include dislocating the concept of 'future' from civilisation's odious progeny 'progress' nor that "to alter the world" can



mean that further entangling ourselves in advanced technics is something we may decide not to pursue. But then the man is obsessed with ideas of progress and regress to which he attaches very conventional value judgements. The idea of living in a state of "everlasting immediacy" is sharply dismissed as living in a state of "asocial bliss" backed up by some spurious reference to the Lotus Eaters in Homer's *Odyssey*! For such a rationalist, Bookchin's reasoning often eludes me.

Bookchin makes so many patently ridiculous statements in this book that you could be forgiven for thinking he is one of those pathologically insane members of society that he repeatedly bars from any of his theoretical citizens' assemblies. The notion of mental illness as a largely class-based symptom of a diseased society seems to have escaped his analysis, along with the idea that humans may have worked out that "we share a common humanity" before the emergence of the city state.

Beyond these criticisms I think Bookchin may have a point when he talks about the need for coherence and a politics beyond that of imagination and the liberation of desire. Just as Ward Churchill argued in *Pacifism as Pathology*<sup>3</sup> that non-violent action in, for example, the American civil rights movement did not achieve change without a simultaneous, grassroots, armed attack on the State, isn't it likely that the contemporary radical grassroots direct action network challenging life as we know it cannot effect much more than cosmetic social change (and a more liberatory way of life for the few radical but not yet revolutionary networks and individuals in the West), without the collateral existence of a strong popular resistance?

I disagree fundamentally with much of what Murray Bookchin has to say—about technics, the workability and desirability of city society and confederalism, the arrogance of Bookchin's belief in humanity's stewardship of and superiority over "first nature", and his uncritical belief in progress. But whether or not you agree with him, his ideas are much better articulated in his other books. His ideas on coherence, or lack thereof, do strike a chord as we flounder into the 21st Century. As we face the risk of being driven deeper underground, there is a possibility that cynicism and pessimism

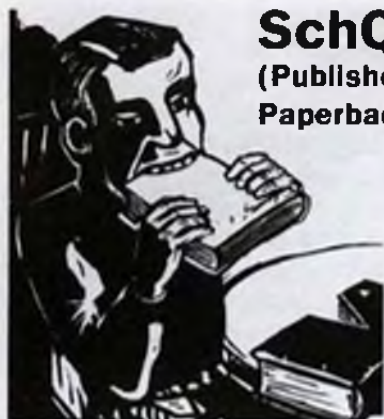
could come to play a corrupting or paralysing role in informing what Bookchin refers to as "adventurism", but which I would call "fight", as we experience a more profound sense of how high the walls are that are closing in. Unfortunately, even Bookchin's more valid points are overwhelmingly diverted into mutually debasing personal diatribe in this and recent works. This is a collection of memoirs and rejoinders masquerading as historical and theoretical essays of worth. Bookchin is an anachronism—and he is as removed from the movements of today as he is from his glory days in the earlier part of the twentieth century. This volume is desperately trying to make his position clear (reneging pathologically on previously held opinions) and to have the last laugh at his critics. I think some of Bookchin's work is worth having a look at, but this is definitely not one of them. ★

## Notes

- 1) To subject yourself to the catfight between Bookchin the Anarchist and Black/Clark/Watson/Zerzan et al the anarchists, the following few books might be useful: *Social Anarchism vs. Lifestyle Anarchism—An Unbridgeable Chasm* by Murray Bookchin (AK Press, Edinburgh and San Francisco, 1995) ISBN 1-873176-83-X, *Beyond Bookchin—Preface for a Future Social Ecology* by David Watson (Autonomedia, New York/Black and Red, Detroit, USA, 1996) ISBN 0-934868-32-8 and *Anarchy After Lottism* by Bob Black (CAL Press, Columbia, USA, 1997) ISBN 1-890532-00-2—as well, of course, as this book and numerous articles and letters in various US anarchist publications, especially *Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed*.
- 2) Throughout the Great Debate the terms 'the Left' and 'Leftist' are used in a rather vague way as some sort of catch-all insult. I think it is something slightly nebulous, but nonetheless accurate. For me it describes a political perspective that has a faith in progress (production), technology and the city. All these require a citizenry defined by its relationship to a highly structured social process on an institutional scale, and who engage in abstracted activity. Defined almost solely by its relationship to itself, Bookchin's society is without question of the same ilk as that which currently devastates the world—caught up as it is within its own fucked up and circular logic. Bookchin offers no critique of civilisation and does not challenge our relationship to nature in any meaningful way. Without revolutionising ideas on civilisation and the natural world it is not possible to smash hierarchies and the State—and so depart from our current way of life. His support of progress, highly developed technologies and of the urban environment distinguishes him as someone who speaks more from a traditional leftist perspective than a contemporary anarchist one.
- 3) *Pacifism as Pathology—Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* by Ward Churchill with Mike Ryan and an introduction by Ed Mead. (Arbeiter Ring Publishing, Canada, 1998) For a review of this book see *Do or Die* No.8, pp.305-30.







# SchQUALL

(Published by SchNEWS, c/o PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX, UK)  
Paperback/266pp/£8.50 including postage/ISBN 0-9529748-3-5

Emerging out of the Brighton wing of the anti-Criminal Justice Bill campaign, the first issue of the witty, direct action focused newsletter

*SchNEWS* hit the streets in late 1994. Over six years later and the impressive weekly production schedule continues—with no sign of the creeping stagnation and irrelevance so common with some of the more theory-based publications.

Every year or so some of the *SchNEWS* crew publish a book. Primarily a compilation of the previous year's 50 or so issues, they're also filled with cartoons, photos and articles—as well as comprehensive contact listings. This most recent book contains re-prints of issues 201-250, covering the events from mid-February 1999 through to early March 2000. To fill in some of the gaps between these, this edition has been a collaborative effort with *Squall*, a newspaper-style publication started in 1992 that mutated into a web site and occasional pamphlet producer a few years ago.

Rather horribly boasting that if "*SchNEWS* is yer tabloid, *Squall* is yer broadsheet", *Squall* seems to reject the personal and political anonymity that *SchNEWS* has so admirably stuck with over the years, and nearly all of their pieces are credited. All the better for their CVs when they go for that job with *The Guardian* I suppose.

Despite being an average of only a couple of pages the articles are billed as providing "in-depth analysis", and some are completely fucking shit and read like something you'd find in any mainstream newspaper. One of the worst is the eyewitness account of the N30 demo/riot at Euston station in London. It lauds the police for defending themselves "without force" and then blames one "masked man who started the whole thing". It then suggests that more people should speak out to "defend their right to protest... without interference from destructive elements". It continues by saying that there "is a difference between civil disobedience and violence directed against symbols of authority" and blames the latter for diverting attention away from the focus of the 'protests'—with the reaction of the corporate/state media used as a touchstone for judging this.

This article is followed by another N30 related piece entitled 'K.O. the WTO'. This is a based on a

liberal interpretation of globalisation, with the complaint that it is "costing people their jobs" whilst ruining "healthy local economies" and "eroding democracy". Later on the article manages to get even worse. Plugging LETS (locally run currency/work schemes) as an 'alternative' model. It then goes on to approvingly quote statist David Korten, whose mission seems to be to "restore democracy" with "radical finance reform", even pushing the idea that we "establish mechanisms under the United Nations to regulate transnational finance and trade".

Maybe the writer of the Euston report would approve of the Cuban National Revolutionary Police to keep the peace at our actions and demos. The author of the article 'Sun, Salsa and Socialismo' probably would, as he seems so impressed with Cuba I wouldn't be surprised if he had run off to join them. Just how he can justify calling any nation state (no matter how 'socialist' it calls itself) a "successful alternative to capitalism" is quite beyond me. It is also slightly worrying that the author of this article managed to sound pleased when he reported that Fidel recently announced "20 to 30 year prison sentences" for "pimps, drug sellers and thieves", and "reform centres" for "repeat offender" prostitutes.

Although there is just too much politically horrible stuff to trawl through in this one short review a final mention must be made of the piece on the UK arms trade. Moaning that the "keenest scientific and engineering minds... from the nation's top universities" would be better finding ways to "revive British industry" the writer seems to miss the point about the arms trade somewhat. A touch of nationalism even creeps in when the author seems unimpressed that the manufacturing license for flat screen TVs went to a Japanese company because "there are no British-owned TV manufacturers"!

In conclusion then, this book is essentially two publications combined. The *SchNEWS* re-prints, some of the photos, cartoons and a few other pieces, are excellent—but most of the *Squall* pieces vary from politically weak, through to being reactionary and dangerous. A friend even went so far as to call it "the worst collection of political essays that our movement has yet produced". Despite this, it's still worth getting hold of as a reference guide to some of the past fun in our lives—a book to bring down off the bookshelves to refresh story-telling memories for our grandchildren. Just remember to cut the *Squall* bits out. ★



# Lettuce to the Cabbage

Our letters pages are open access and we will print most things we receive—although remember that they do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Do or Die* editorial collective. Due to space constraints we would prefer it if letters could be kept to 500 words or less.

## ★Star Letter!

### So True

Dear *Do or Die*,

You people are sick and need help badly.

Yours,

Dale

Email: [schnurr@ezlink.on.ca](mailto:schnurr@ezlink.on.ca)

### Even Better than the 80s?

Dear *Do or Die*,

Many thanks for the copy of *Do or Die* Number 8. I've been reading it all day and in my opinion it's excellent. A few of the articles were a little wordy, but overall informative with a good global perspective on things and inspirational reports on J18, genetic trashings and camps/tunnels.

In some ways everything we hoped for back in the 1980s is coming true. The Hillgrove closure, the genetics thing and J18 are part of this—that people have no faith in politicians, bureaucrats or this shit sick system. The protest movements are getting stronger and *Do or Die* is part of that, so credit where it is due. Here's to many more issues. Be encouraged!

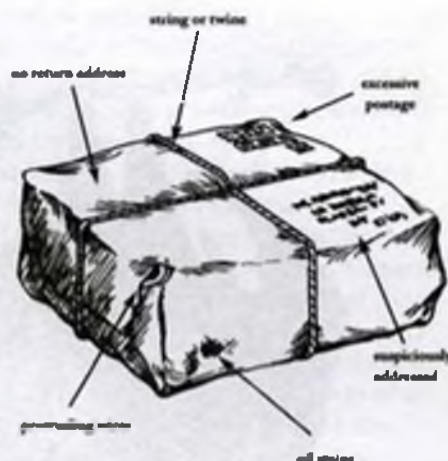
With best wishes,

SB

### Pink Panthers

Dear *Do or Die* Editorial Collective,

Congratulations on producing such a comprehensive, intelligent and all-round journal in *Do or Die* Number 8! In particular, your articles on feminism and womens' liberation were interesting, informative and indicative of how the counter culture/DIY movement is growing in its understanding of all movements against oppression. However, if you're analysing womens' liberation, then its political and historical sibling, gay liberation, should also be considered. The two movements arose virtually simultaneously during the counter cultural high tide of the late 1960s, against a background of hostility and antipathy



which is hard to conceive of even today. Little more than thirty years ago, lesbian and gay people were, according to orthodox medicine, mentally ill (and could under certain circumstances be compelled to undergo grisly electro-convulsive 'aversion therapy'), were subject to surveillance, police harassment, fascist attacks, prosecutions, employment dismissal and media demonisation. All these remain all too common features of the present as well.

My aim here is not to give a potted history of 30 years of gay politics—in under 500 words it's an impossible task! Suffice it to say that direct action and solidarity with other struggles have been central features of the movement: The Gay Liberation Front in the early 1970s immediately threw in its lot with anti-militarism, anti-fascism and anti-capitalist politics. GLF groups organised support for the Black Panther Party, the Angry Brigade, set up squats and counter-institutions for gays kicked out of home. And, along with feminists, disrupted the set-piece 'moral rearmament' events of the day, and even advised young straight draftees on how to drag-up convincingly so as to be labelled deviant and avoid Vietnam!

During the 1980s Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners raised upwards of £40,000 for striking communities, demonstrating the power of solidarity in challenging prejudices, and the early 1990s new wave of radicalism brought direct action groups OutRage! and the Lesbian Avengers into the coalitions against the Persian Gulf War, Criminal Justice Act and Asylum Bill.

As with feminism and anti-racism, however, co-option has stolen the radicalism of parts of the gay liberation movement, harnessing anger and hope to a commodified identity and reformist politics. The membership of radical gay groups is down, the Lesbian Avengers have folded and OutRage! has sadly become a mostly civil liberties lobbying cell. Even the annual Pride March through London is under threat, with proposals for a corporate take-





over and transformation of the event into little more than a commercial street parade.

There are a plethora of views on how to go forward: all-gay direct action groups? Being out within other, 'straight' networks? Personally, I favour a mixture of both where necessary: homo-hatred should be opposed by direct actions, but that shouldn't stop activists from contributing to other struggles, as neither should it stop straights from giving solidarity to ours. We have all learnt much from each other in the past and can continue to do so.

In solidarity,  
T

## Moral Automations Must Die!

Dear *Do or Die*,

In my opinion, the letter from JR against listing Albert Dryden as a political prisoner (*Do or Die* Number 8, p.340) is wrong.

Your correspondent claims Collinson was involved in campaigns, and was gentle etc. etc. Yet this same council bureaucrat tried to pull down Mr Dryden's bungalow. One is reminded of those accounts of Rudolf Hoess—the commandant of Auschwitz—who loved children, was a good family man and kept an excellent vegetable garden. It is not the personal life of the bureaucrat that is the seat of the problem, it is their role as a bureaucrat itself.

Harry Collinson was acting as a council official. He was only obeying orders, when he moved in to demolish Albert Dryden's bungalow. So was Hoess only obeying orders. The US Army were only obeying orders when they carried out the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. The police in Yorkshire during the 1984 Miners' Strike were only obeying orders. So were the poll tax bailiffs only obeying

orders. So were the Hampshire Police etc. etc. etc. All states are like this.

Moral automations are not part of any ethical community. To claim that bureaucrat actions are outside ethics is to deny the moral community. Thus the death of a bureaucrat/automaton is no loss to the ethical world.

In the same way, it seems contradictory to e.g. support the sacked trade union members at GCHQ Cheltenham. These people are tapping our phones, opening our post etc. High time these were shunned, refused to be served in shops, pubs. The 'relationship' between Dryden and Collinson is a model for all relationships between the individual and the state.

Pity he didn't finish off the BBC reporter too!  
SB

## You Can't Grow up a Social Relationship

Dear *Do or Die*,

Permaculture is a part of the repression that denies any genuine expression of love and freedom. It consents to, and thus becomes, a part of creating and recreating patterns of behaviour based on the illusion of authority and its various expressions: bureaucracy, hierarchy, patronisation, denial, deceit and their inevitable consequence—violence, destruction of life. It is self-destruction.

Permaculture is one more aspect of this institutionalised violence that is sublimated into the self, so a false normality or 'reality' is maintained that forever seeks to reform itself, to reform behavioural patterns which are creating systematic destruction of all life. It is basically self-denial.

Only direct action challenges the illusion that is authority, an act of love and truth, which actively challenges the deceit and denial, an act that gives space for the possibility of an honest relationship that is not denied by power.

This possibility, this honesty, is the possibility of us all. This is the only healing. It can only be global, the end of all authority, the end of all illusion. This can be expressed and lived in the present, direct action. There is never any 'giving up', 'retiring', never any 'loss' or 'gain', there is only a greater expression of life, of love. Direct action is this expression, it is an act of honesty in a reality based on deceit and denial. Permaculture is part of this deceit and denial. (If it did not involve the exchange of money it would be different.)

A permanently sustainable human culture (permaculture) can only be realised through the end of all authority, through honesty. Permaculture, in consenting to authority, becomes an agent in maintaining it. It is behaviour based on deceit and illusion (consenting to dishonest relationships based on authority.)



Realise that authority is an illusion, there is no authority. Authority is a lie. It is something our parents taught us, us children, to keep us quiet. It is no longer relevant to the present, we are no longer children. This realisation is the healing—it is self-realisation. Direct action is just an expression of this self-realisation. I feel I am stating the obvious. Authority has many guises, many plays. All are recognisable. In recognising it, it no longer has any power and the individual becomes self-empowered, free. Authority is just a mind trick, another dishonesty. It is rooted in past ways of behaving and relating, based on authority. We can outgrow these dishonest ways of behaving and relating. Outgrow the stuff our parents taught us—come into real time; the present.

There is no authority in the present, authority is illusion. Anyone claiming authority now is still believing stuff their parents taught them as a child, is still falling for the mind trick, has not yet realised their own mind. They are projecting past learned behaviour patterns onto the present, they are living a projection, an illusion. In the present there is no authority, to live this is the only practicality, this is to come into the present, to outgrow learned ideas and to live possibility. This is the possibility of us all. This is direct action. If anyone is still holding onto illusory ideas of authority, these ideas must be challenged, for they are simply learned ideas that do not relate to the present. This is the only practicality. This brings people into present awareness where all possibility lies. This is healing, to live this truth. This healing is global, it is forever in the present, it is present awareness.

It cannot be added to or taken from, cannot gain or lose, it is just a growth. Recognise authority and challenge it, this is all there is to do. The authority is in your own mind (fear). Realise this and peace arises naturally, like a new day dawning; the human race 'wakes up' to global peace. Direct action is the practical expression of this realisation—self-realisation. It is only practicality to live this truth, this present, this honesty, this love.

Yours,

D

PS: I object to the terms 'protester', 'activist' and 'demonstrator' as they are unreal and divisive. What about 'person', 'people' and 'human beings'?

## A Bright Star in Dark Days

Hi friends of *Do or Die*,

I am a Spanish anarchist and militant in a libertarian direct action union, its name is CNT (National Confederation of Workers).

Well I saw a TV report on national channel called 'Canal Plus', it was about how the British State allowed private companies to cut down forest and build motorways or airports there,

unfortunately that is something very usual in Spain and the rest of states in the whole world as well, but there was something more, there were people fighting against those companies, people defended the forest, each tree was a life to protect.

They built houses on the top of the trees (like the Ewoks in 'Star Wars') and I saw how the company hired people to fight against the 'tree defenders', I was really surprised about it, I saw all those people fighting for the nature and they weren't Greenpeace people. You know the capitalist system uses the mass media to show us that Greenpeace is the only 'rebel' big group which fights for ecology, I think it is a big lie because Greenpeace people are similar to 'politicians' because they use the same system tools to fight for the environment, but you know this better than me never the less I think they fight for a very good cause, but sometimes I think they are no more than politicians.

A woman of the forest camp sang a sad song with a beautiful voice in the last minutes of the TV report, and pictures of the evolution of the forest were showed since the camp had been created until only one tree was left and all around it was completely devastated. It was very sad, sincerely teardrops fell down from my eyes, but the song had a feeling of hope, it was like if Mother Nature and Planet Earth spoke by her voice. I really felt the same that she sang and I believe anyone would feel the same because the Nature spoke by her mouth. When the TV report finished I decided to go to Great Britain and meet them.

So I travelled to England, I arrived in London and met some squatter friends in Brixton (South London) and began my fight for dreams of utopia. I usually went to the 121 Centre in Rallton Road, it was a famous squat social centre in South London area (I'm sure you know it), they wrote the *Contraflow* news, there I met the last step of the anarchist evolution 'the vegan and eco-defence culture' and I had my first news about Earth First!. I wasn't vegetarian before I arrived in London but I changed my way of eating in a few months because the vegan fight was pretty close to my way of thinking, I realised in that time that the





anarchist movement in Spain and ecologic fight was sleeping compared with British anarchism.

I don't know if you know something about the Spanish anarchist movement history, anyway I will tell you something.

Anarchist trade union CNT was stronger in the early twentieth century and during the Spanish Civil War. The libertarian movement fought very strongly against fascism but that is not the most important fact, it was the revolutionary process made during the war in 1936. It started in Catalonia (Barcelona area, North Spain) and it was extended to the east Aragon and South Valencia very fast. It is the only moment in world history that the anarchist movement triumphed, they collectivised earth and property and changed village government and councils for popular assembly (meetings), but they hadn't only the opposition of the National Army (the fascists) they also had the opposition of the Communist Party (leader of the Republican faction) this was worse than the fascists because the Republican government stopped and reduced the libertarian revolution with their rules.

The highest point of the libertarian movement in Spanish history was 1937, after that Franco won the war and began the darkest period of Spanish history, it was the death sentence for the left in Spain and for anarchism was the complete destruction, thousands of people were killed during 50 years of dictatorship, and when Franco died the 'democracy' came back to Spain and our borders were opened to the world. The anarchist movement is reborn from the ashes and shadows, but those 50 years of silence are a very big weight and libertarian ideas haven't evolved and so face the problems of the new world with the same strategies of 70 years ago. There are some exceptions in the big cities like Barcelona and Madrid where a minority of squatters exist with vegan and ecologist ideas—but very small compared with Great Britain.

Then I saw in your country that there is a natural evolution of libertarian ideas and you have seen that environmental destruction is the worst problem that humanity has to face, because if we destroy the part of Nature that we need to survive we will be condemned to disappear like animal species, I think you have seen this years ago and you are fighting in consequence.

Well I was in England for a year and I had the opportunity to meet that kind of people (who fight for the forests with direct actions like you) in a meeting party in the Jan Rebane Centre in Brixton they organised vegan dinners and poetry nights and that concert night a group of forest fighters (probably very close to 'Earth First!') organised a meeting and I saw photographs of their last forest camp. That was the moment that I had been looking for during all the time I was in London, but



I am a shy man and I didn't speak fluid English in that moment so I didn't face the chance and lost my opportunity to make real one of my dreams.

I live in a small town of 65,000 citizens and we have two libertarian groups here. Our stronger struggle is against the bull fighters (bull killers) and bull killing, but this is the only fight close to the ecological struggle, you know the most part of our strength goes in campaigns against unemployment (this is a very big problem here) and against politicians, this is what I mean before, here we forget the environmental problems. I am the only man on my collective to have travelled to Great Britain but not only for a washing up job in London. I also went to your country to see and know how you give solutions to the social problems and live the libertarian reality with the squatter movement, I met people of 'Earth First!' and that is a really different way of thinking. In Spain we are dozens of years back, I mean the environmental crash isn't far away and the planet situation reclaims direct action, I know you really know we have no more than 50 years to change the relationship between mankind and Nature, if we use and spend all our energy fighting for better jobs and better wages, we are losing precious time to save our Mother Nature and save ourselves. We sleep here with problems and strategies of Bakunin's one century ago.

We have here a fanzine called *la @rroba* and I would like to open a section about ecology and animal liberation, and I would like to show to my friends how you fight with news about your struggle.

Well my friends of Earth First! the rest I can tell you is keep on fighting, you are a very bright star to follow on these dark days.

Your Spanish friend,

A

## Dialectics, Innit

Dear *Do or Die*,

Despite being an excellent article, 'The New Luddite War: We Will Destroy Genetic Engineering!' (see *Do or Die* No.8, p.89) made an error in stating that "the—now global—elite continues to wage a war on the class that remains the main threat to its existence—the global peasantry." It seems that the author of this article believes that because the peasantry are reliant on the land for



subsistence and are generally outside the market economy they are therefore a great threat to capitalism. Of course, this proves the exact opposite—because the peasantry have no intrinsic connection to capital, they exist for it only as a possible realm for further expansion. The struggles of the peasantry consist of resisting this expansion, which is undoubtedly an important and vital struggle and one which does attack capital, for capital must always expand. However, the global peasantry, because they are to an extent outside of capitalism cannot directly hit the heart of the beast.

The struggles of wage workers in capitalist economies on the other hand, can. It is the labour of wage workers that creates and maintains capital, that creates the profits it needs in order to continue to exist. Merely by stopping work they strike a powerful blow against the system.

In order to understand this society we need to understand both capital and class and their relationship. Grasping only one side of the story will lead us into all sorts of problems.

Many Marxist academics and theorists understand only capital and ignore class struggle and they end up with a very skewed view of the world. Likewise class struggle anarchists, who seem to be allergic to reading Marx, don't understand capital and similarly end up confused. 'The New Luddite War' seems to be an example of the latter tendency—although being ecological class struggle anarchism, it takes the peasantry rather than the workers as its central protagonists. The author of the piece understands this society is characterised by a struggle between classes but appears confused about what these classes are or how they relate to capitalism. Are we talking rich and poor? the peasantry vs. the elite, or what?

Capital is entirely composed of surplus-value, extracted from the labour of wage workers by making them work longer than is necessary for them to reproduce the value of their wages. The extra value they produce above this is the capitalist's profit. This is the central motor of the entire system. If this extraction of surplus-value falters or stops, the entire system stops. Whether we like it or not, wage workers in capitalist enterprises occupy a centrally important place in the system, which is why so much energy has been dedicated to destroying, defeating and co-opting their revolutionary activity.

Yours,  
Charlie Marx's Enormous Whiskers

## Handbags at Dawn

Dear *Do or Die*,

With regard to the letter from Bob Black in issue 8 (pp.337-338) of your publication, this fails to deal with the issues raised about Black's racism and dodgy political involvements outlined in my 1997 pamphlet *Anarchist Integralism* (available for £3.00 in British stamps from: Sabotage Editions, BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX). Black—who has written for the neo-Nazi *Journal of Historical Review*—opines in *Anarchy after Leftism* pp.44-45:

"I'm not one of those who cries out in horror at the slightest whiff of anti-Semitism. But the Dean sees fit to insinuate that even the promiscuously pluralistic Hakim Bey is ideologically akin to Hitler, and that the primitivist quest to recover authenticity "has its roots in reactionary romanticism, most recently in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose volkish 'spiritualism,' latent in *Being and Time*, later emerged in his explicitly fascist works." So let's consider whether Bookchin-vetted classical anarchists are

ideologically kosher. Proudhon was notoriously anti-Semitic but since Bookchin dismisses him, however implausibly, as too much the individualist, let's set Proudhon aside. Bakunin, the Russian aristocrat who "emphatically prioritized the

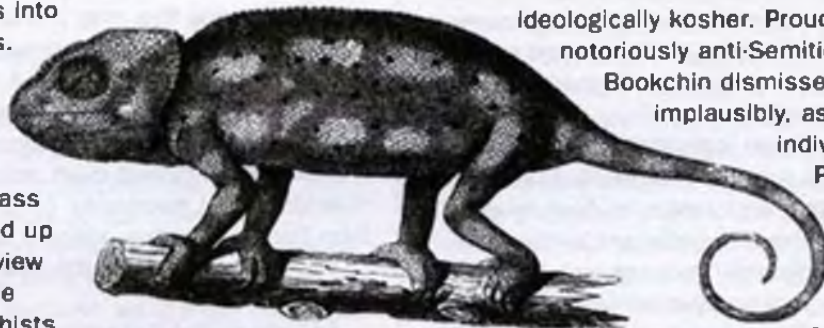
social over the individual" had a notion what was wrong with his authoritarian rival, Karl Marx. Bakunin considered Marx "the German scholar, in his threefold capacity as an Hegelian, a Jew and a German," to be a "hopeless statist". Hegelian, a Jew, a sort-of scholar, a Marxist, a hopeless (city) statist—does this sound like anybody familiar?"

The style of invective quoted above runs through the whole of *Anarchy after Leftism*:

"The hard Right Republicans, like Newt Gingrich, along with the Neo-Conservative intellectuals (most of the latter, like the Dean, being high-income, elderly Jewish ex-Marxists from New York City who ended up as journalists and/or academics) blame the decline of Western Civilization on the '60s.'"(p.21).

Similar sentiments can be found in Black's other writing. For example, 'My Date With Jim Hogshire (Version 2.1)' in *Big Bad Bob Black: A Popular Reality Special Report* (Popular Reality, Jackson, p.6), a somewhat idiosyncratic account of events surrounding Bob Black's activity as a police informant:

"I turned the tables on the Muslim maniac. You know how the towel-heads are always taking Westerners hostage: I took one of them hostage.







Having a gun trained on you concentrates the mind wonderfully. When Jim pointed his rifle at me, I grabbed Heidi as a human shield. Whereupon (you surely suppose) he put his gun down. Not so! He trained his rifle on his own wife! "The animal did not seem to care!" as he wrote to Junto. I didn't care? I wasn't aiming a gun at her. Jim was wired up and fired up to shoot her if that's what it took to shoot me. Which, come to think of it, is consistent with how Muslims regard their women—as disposable. And with how junkies regard their junk—as their top priority: "Opium is that Muslim's religion!" (John Marmysz)."

With the same twisted logic that he uses to justify his activity as a police informant, Black rants about Heidegger and Jung in *Anarchy after Leftism* (p.43) as: "the twentieth-century German intellectuals he (Bookchin) j'accuses as carriers of nineteenth-century conservative romantic ideology."

Invoking Dreyfus (j'accuse) in defence of a card-carrying member of the Nazi Party such as Heidegger—not to mention Jung, the author of *Storm Of Steel* and *Battle As Inner Experience*—is a transparent attempt at presenting the victimisers as victims. As such, Black's rhetoric functions in a manner analogous to other anti-semitic propaganda—ranging from the calumnies of Bakunin to the fraudulent writings of Nesta Webster, and outright forgeries such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

On the basis of this, and his other writing, it is clear that Black is a racist. As well as being the author of *Politics, Prejudice and Procedure: The Impeachment Trial of Andrew Jackson* which first appeared in the neo-Nazi and holocaust-denying *Journal of Historical Review* (Vol.7, No.2, Summer 1986, pp.175-192), Bob Black frequently has his articles reprinted in *Green Anarchist* (who also run 'Irrationalist' propaganda by Steve Booth advocating the gassing of the thousands upon thousands of workers who use the tube). Loompanics Unlimited, who have published Black's *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*, as well as other texts by him, specialise in producing extreme right-wing pro-capitalist and survivalist material. I appreciate that you may not have been aware of all

this, but hope in future you will not be running further correspondence from racists and grasses like Bob Black.

Regards,  
Luther Blisset

## Help!

Dear all,

It's now been two years since Ted Kaczynski was sentenced to multiple life terms for the 1978-95 anti-tech Unabombing campaign, following a farcical trial in Sacramento. Ted's currently appealing this conviction. After the trial, Ted was sent to the notorious Florence Supermax prison, Colorado, where he's been denied visits from everyone except Journalists, who he generally doesn't want to talk to.

Ted's main contact with the outside world has been by mail, with publishers Context Books covering postage costs. Now Ted's rebuttal to smears against him by his family and the media, *Truth vs. Lies*, is not being published, he is no longer receiving this mail money.

The Friends of Ted Kaczynski has been formed to cover Ted's mailing costs. A donation of just 30 cents will pay for a letter, so please support this anarchist political prisoner! Send your donations—preferably well-hidden cash dollars, clearly marked 'Friends of Ted Kaczynski' (with cheques payable to John Zerzan)—to the address below.

Yours—for the destruction of civilisation,  
GW  
Friends of Ted Kaczynski  
BCM 1715  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK

## Single Vegan Male Seeks...

Dear *Do or Die*,

I'm contacting you with an unusual plea, a very unusual plea. I doubt you'll print it in your letters section, but there's no harm asking!

I'm a single vegan male (32, tall, slim, athletic, with long brown hair, blue eyes and an aversion to the 'rat race') with a need to father a child. But, I don't want to be committed to a relationship with either the lady or child. I want to maintain my independence. I just want to know I've fathered a child and so have a next of kin. And I'd like the lady to be alternative and vegan, hence contacting you. I don't want any child of mine to have a normal upbringing. I want them brought up as a strict vegan with high moral and ethical standards, and being taught about what they need to know not what society thinks they should know.

I realise I'm expecting a lot but there are partnerless ladies who are willing to be artificially impregnated, a service that can be both lengthy and expensive, so there are ladies who wish to



have a child without commitment to the father, just as I wish to have a child without commitment to the mother.

At least my way a child would be conceived the natural way, through an act of love, not in a test tube, and in comparison to artificial means it would be quicker and cheaper.

This is a genuine plea. I'm not after cheap sexual thrills. If I was I could get them in other ways. I genuinely want to father. And all I would ever ask is for the child to be brought up as a strict vegan with high standards and to be kept informed about their progress. That's it! I promise I wouldn't interfere with their upbringing.

If you're interested please send details about yourself to me at: 7a Heath Close, New England Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3JW, UK and I'll send you more details about myself.

If you could print this for me I'd be extremely grateful.

Pax vobiscum,  
Adrien J Dyson

## Seminal Solidarity

Dear *Do or Die*,

Greetings and good health! Thank you for the information and publication you sent. It was quite informative and did help me pass the time in this US prison. I must venture to say I live the oppressive life so I do not really like to read much about it. It makes me think that people such as myself are forgotten because we are too small and can't really make an impact on the cause. We are dormant, stagnant. Just living a day to day existence. Having to pay or barter for the basic needs of life. The very needs most people take for granted. The prisons are not only a sub-culture but a vastly spread out third world country. To be honest I would rather prefer reading materials which take my mind out of this madness. I do enjoy thoughts of females. Even after 20 years in prison, I would prefer spending my time fantasising about women. I must be a healthy male after all these years! So, I would like some hot and nasty novels. They must come from a publisher such as yourself. No picture books. Just hot steamy novels. However, actual camera type pictures are welcome but cannot be polaroids nor show penetration or body fluids. I would enjoy such pictures of my British sisters. I hope I haven't offended anyone. I just want to be honest and up front. Being a foreigner in a US prison is no fun and it is extremely lonely and one feels very isolated. Personal correspondence is more than welcome. I am looking into transferring back to the UK to do my time so it would be very important to establish some contacts in that area also. I guess I wouldn't feel so lonely and isolated except that I am serving time for a murder I did not commit. It was so

strange that the person who did admit the murder received less time than I did. I would have more understanding and appreciation for the prison if I were in here for doing something against the law. This is a very strange criminal justice system here. Help a lonely British brother by keeping his hopes alive with the thoughts of British women and lust.

Thank you for your time, effort and consideration in this matter. With warm and sincere personal regards, I am humbly,

Scott C Smith  
MCC/WSR  
278891 A3-3  
PO Box 777  
Monroe WA 98272-0777  
USA

## Slap in the Face

Dear *Do or Die*,

I never find the urge to write to magazines but after reading the critical view of the Intercontinental Caravan (ICC) in the last issue I had to respond. Fair enough, I agree with most of the criticisms outlined, but what I disagree with is the need for this article in the first place. If it had been alongside a more critical appraisal of the ICC then I wouldn't have to write this, even though there is a more positive image of the project given in a different section of *Do or Die*. Such a mega-project may have been disliked by the author(s) but such criticism is a slap in the face to those who sacrificed up to nine months of their lives. The prospect of bringing 500 people from the South to





confront the corporations that are fucking up their lives was an exciting project. It was not to the detriment of these people that some of the problems that arose were unseen until they went through the process of making the project happen. To criticise this is unfair since such a massive undertaking had never been attempted before. Indeed the general tone of the article gives the impression that the author(s) had an axe to grind. Why?

Yours,  
S

## Stop! In the Name of Love...

Dear *Do or Die*,

So here it is again! Despite the editorial collective vowing never to put themselves through the wrangle of another issue, despite the printing staff's glazed expressions and collective back problems after last year's truncated production process, despite the spontaneous combustion of many angry pacifists as they read the 'Things that go Bang' section. And, most of all, despite the pleading and moaning of those nearest and dearest to the editorial collective to lay off the political propaganda and spend those summer months being loving and lovable human beings rather than the miserable, exhausted and nocturnal creatures that the editing of *Do or Die* reduces them to. I've had enough! As one of those in dangerously close proximity to the editorial process, I have a sanity saving plea for all sincere and sympathetic readers of this issue. Distractions please! Anything and everything will be tried—good novels, bad videos, zines, saucy photos, plane tickets, origami books, erotic literature, recipes and lewd suggestions...

Please send to *Do or Delirium* at the usual address and accept my heartfelt appreciation at saving me from the yawning chasm of despair (my partner in the midst of the next issue).

With love from a desperate woman.

## Those that Can't...

Dear *Do or Die*,

Cheers for the generous review. I think it is vital to maintain some kind of relationship between practical activism and research. *Do or Die* flies at reasonably high level discourse and the general level of thought and reflexivity in the movement is much higher than within groups like the Green Party or the NGOs who can think policy but in my experience rarely in terms of politics and strategy. One attractive feature has been your meditations on history which are generally well-referenced and interesting attempts to trace back lineages of revolt.

I have, though, felt that your histories have seemed a bit smooth. In the words of Clarke\* you



are in danger often of collapsing "the lengthy and complex process of stylistic development into too narrow a moment of analysis, and thus neglect [ing] how certain aspects are taken up or become imbued with an especial significance at particular moments and in relation to particular events." (Clarke 1976, p.182)

There is no very direct link between us and the pirates or King Ludd (except via Ed Abbey)! Equally movements and tactics are impure. The stuff on the Gordon Riots though went beyond being slightly too historically slick. The rioters burnt working class Irish homes as well as rough handling their lordships. Gordon was campaigning against Catholic emancipation. Okay, there were more sussed energies at work and lots of prisons were burnt to the ground and commercial activity in the city was impaired. The whole thing was a precursor to 1789, maybe William Blake was there and we all know that *Barnaby Rudge* is Dickens' only interesting novel etc., etc., but your account is one sided and in particular would tend to piss off any one from an Irish Republican tradition.

Cheers,

Derek Wall

Centre for the Study of Social and Political Movements, University of Kent at Canterbury.

\* See Clarke, J. (1976) 'Style' in Hall, S., Clarke, J., Jefferson, T. and Roberts, B. (eds) *Resistance Through Rituals*, (London, Hutchinson)

## Fascism behind the Mask of Anarchy

Dear *DoD*,

I write to warn your readers of a disturbing new political tendency that seems to have recently emerged, which though yet small, deserves to be stamped on swiftly. Others may have noticed publicity knocking around for an event called 'The Anarchist Heretics Fair', publicising itself with the strap-line: "Beyond Left and Right". It was advertised as a forum for the "outsiders and rejects from the mainstream contemporary anarchist movement including neo-medievalists, Goths... anarcho-monarchists, surrealists... neo-pagans, druids, odinists, folk autonomists and the hermeticists anarchist undergrounds." Now, I admit, I was tempted by some of this—I'm as amused by ley-lines and secret Martian bunkers



under St. Paul's Cathedral as the next man, (here it comes...), BUT...

It was fucking dodgy. Among those advertised as attending were: *Nexus*—an Australian-based New Age magazine with proven and documented links to the far right; Albion Awake! (as if the name were not warning enough!)—a one-man Christian Anarchist group consisting of Wayne John Sturgeon, who promulgates a strange combination of conspiracy theory, evangelical Bible-bashing and British nationalism; and *Alternative Green*—a magazine put out by the ex-editor of *Green Anarchist*, Richard Hunt, who was kicked out for being on the far right, that, again, has links with fascists. And that's just the ones I've heard of!

Following the first thankfully very poorly attended event held in Brighton on the 6th May, a second Anarchist Heretics Fair was advertised for Saturday 14th October in an obscure venue in South London. This date was picked in direct competition with the Anarchist Bookfair. The Heretics Fair was to have included many of the same participants as before, with some new additions, including the group *Nationale Anarchie* (see: [www.nationale-anarchie.de](http://www.nationale-anarchie.de)) from Germany and the "National-Anarchist" National Revolutionary Faction (NRF), who engage in a avowed strategy of attending lots of 'our' events. Troy Southgate, the leader of the anti-Semitic NRF and an ex-National Front organiser, has said, "The NRF uses cadre activists to infiltrate political groups, institutions and services... It is part of our strategy to do this work and, if we are to have any success in the future, it is work that must be done on an increasing basis" ('Neo-Nazis Join Animal Rights Groups', *Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday 3rd September 2000).

Anti-fascists organised against this second Heretics Fair and the whole thing was thankfully called off due to threats the organisers said they had received. Some of them turned up to leaflet the Anarchist Bookfair later in the day and were persuaded to fuck off. Nevertheless, we should keep our eyes and ears open for any further left-right convergence moves like this.

In Britain as yet we haven't much had to deal with this sort of stuff because the far right here has consisted of such a benighted collection of boneheads that they are all too busy fighting each other to get anything else together. In Europe, the situation is different and the 'New Right' is much more sophisticated, trying to look respectable or using the language of anti-capitalism.

We must beware of any tendencies within our movement that push in this direction. For example, Tony Gosling of The Land Is Ours runs the [www.bilderberg.org](http://www.bilderberg.org) website, which collects information on the Bilderberg group, a secret organisation of the rich and powerful. Unfortunately the existence of such a group is like

manna from heaven for right-wing conspiracy theorists and loony tunes of all descriptions, seeming to fulfill all their prophecies. Even more unfortunately Gosling is a Bible-bashing Christian who believes it's all part of a plot by the Illuminati and then goes on to point people in the direction of fascist groups for more information.

I would recommend everyone to read the article 'Beware of Bad Bedfellows' by the Dutch group *De Fabel van de Illegaal* in the *Reflections on June 18th* pamphlet published last year, which explains how far-right groups spouting radical language involved themselves in anti-globalisation movements in the Netherlands, and how in some ways those movements laid themselves open to this attack. If you can't find a copy of the pamphlet, it's available on-line at: [www.infoshop.org/octo/j18\\_rts2.html](http://www.infoshop.org/octo/j18_rts2.html)

Also, check out this site for more info against right-left links: [www.savanne.ch/right-left.html](http://www.savanne.ch/right-left.html)

There have always been some elements in our politics that the far right can latch onto. That doesn't mean that those elements should necessarily be discarded. It does mean we should be vigilant not to allow any muddying of the waters. If 'anarchist' Wayne John Sturgeon of Albion Awake! can say he is "interested in the growing convergence of the radical decentralist left with the radical decentralist right—in opposition to the globalisation of capital and the neo-liberal free market," then surely we have to do something to distinguish ourselves from that sort of politics. We need to develop our ideas and our actions so that the far right can have no common ground with them—so that no such convergence can ever occur.

B

NB: The whole thing appears to have been organised by Jonothan Boulter of 4 Huntingdon House, St. Paul's Avenue, Willesden Green, London NW2 5SR. Phone: 020 8459 5520 Email: [hermet@synarch.freemove.co.uk](mailto:hermet@synarch.freemove.co.uk)—Why not drop him a line or something?





## Garlic Gift

Dear *Do or Die*,

Thanks for sending me the latest issue of *Do or Die*—I've really been enjoying reading it. I live on an organic farm in Eastern Washington, USA—also an old hippie commune/land trust, and slowly becoming a refuge for aging anarchists who have escaped the city to become farmers.

I got to know Mark Cook while he was in the local prison via weekly visits. He has since been moved back to the coast—but sends me lots of radical literature that he gets sent, helping to combat my isolation. I'm not sure why he had you send his latest issue to me—but I really appreciate it. I'd like to pay for the next copy but don't have any idea how much to send—not liking government currency much. So here's an example of my own home grown garlic as an offer of my appreciation. Please let me know how much to send for the next issue in US dollars—or if you would accept garlic as a trade it averages \$3.50 per pound.

I really enjoy and feel inspired by the reading of *Do or Die*. It may be that Mark is worried it won't be allowed in—or since he's due to be released soon he'll show up out here and read it. That would be awesome! I'm waiting to hear from him about this.

Thank you.  
Hare

## Praise from a Prisoner

Dear *Do or Die*,

I have been meaning to write to you for the last two weeks but I'm just now getting round to it. You'd be surprised at how busy prison life can be. I make it a point to try and keep as busy as I can in order to keep my mind off the time I am doing. For the most part it works.

In any case... I got the zine you sent and I wanted to thank you for it. I don't yet know who had it sent to me but I read it and I give you all credit for a job well done. One of the things I try and do to keep busy is keep in touch with some of the activist groups around the world. I found that even though I can't be a part of the action I can still keep informed on the happenings. I've seen a lot of action reports over the years and yours is the most complete, well-written and well published that I've seen so far. I am a printer when I'm not serving time for bunk charges and I've seen a lot of crappy work. The bottom line is that it's not the quality of the printing that counts as much as it is the quality of the information. It does help, though, when the work is done in a professional manner. It

lends credence to the issues at hand for some odd reason.

Today is an interesting day at this prison. Evidently someone escaped last night and so now all the screws are running around with their heads up their asses trying to figure out who, when and where. Pretty funny! Most times when this type of thing happens the warden loses his job and a few heads roll. Thank the Gods 'cos our warden is a complete asshole and deserves to get jammed up over this.

Enough of that. I hope you guys continue to spread the word and all is well in your group.

If in the future you're able to send me another copy of *Do or Die* I would really appreciate the thought. The one you just sent will make its rounds among the rest of the cons here. There is a waiting list of about 12 people right now.

Take it easy and keep the faith,

Dave Self #60492

ASPC-T, ECHO 138

PO Box 24402

Tucson AZ 85734-4402

USA

## Request from Death Row

Dear *Do or Die*,

I want to thank you for issue number 8 and would appreciate it if you would keep me on your list to receive other issues. I am interested in all of this, and being a father of daughters I very much appreciate the issues of females. I don't know hardly anyone who is interested in any of these issues and would be very grateful if you would print this letter. I am in hope someone will write to me of the same

interest. I am on Death Row.

Thank you,  
Burley Gilliam  
097234-A1-P-1109-5  
PO Box 221  
Ralford  
Florida 32083  
USA

## No Feuds Is Good Feuds

Annwyl *Do or Die*,

The last *Do or Die* featured an anonymous letter from D attacking Cymru Goch—Welsh Socialists. I'm sad that someone who claims to know "leading" members of Cymru Goch should see fit to defame us anonymously in a magazine for which I have a lot of time.

My initial response was to ignore the letter as a rather embittered person's rant against us but





because it's reached a wider audience I feel I have to respond to the magazine rather than let the slurs go unanswered. Sorry to take up valuable space that should go to constructive campaigning and debate.

I can take all manner of political criticism where accurate. So let's look at the claims:

1. We are described as "heavily statist" without giving a single example. Both in our monthly paper *Y Faner Goch* and *Extreme Democracy—We are the Welsh Socialists* (our introductory pamphlet available to any curious Earth Firsters) we advocate workers' self-management and community control. We specifically attack both the Soviet-style state bureaucracies and Labourite State capitalist nationalisations as being totally at odds with our concept of libertarian socialism. That is taken as a given within Cymru Goch, even though we are not a democratic centralist organisation. As I'm sure D is aware, we're not that bloody organised!

2. The Scottish Republican Socialist Party (SRSP) is described as misogynist, homophobic, openly hostile to anarchism and potty. D succeeds in smearing Cymru Goch by association as we have no formal links with the SRSP (beyond website links) yet the impression given is that we as well as the SRSP are misogynist, homophobic, openly hostile to anarchism and potty. Does D have any proof of this regarding either the SRSP or Cymru Goch?

3. "We claim our heritage from the Free Wales Army (FWA)"—absolute bollocks. We've been openly critical of the FWA for being anti-socialist, although we would not condemn its tactics at the time. Our heritage, as mentioned above, has far more in common with workers' struggle (such as the Rebecca Rioters, miners' self-organisation) throughout the years than a bunch of amateurish adventurers. D mentions a "eulogy" in *Y Faner Goch*—there has been no eulogy. They had many right-wing nationalists among them but I re-read my *To Dream of Freedom* in vain to find a reference to John Tyndall. The NF smear is reminiscent of attempts by the security services to smear Welsh republicanism in the 80s and 90s.

4. Cymru Goch did join with the Socialist Party to form a Welsh Socialist Alliance, not an electoral coalition. This was similar to the Scottish Socialist Alliance (now Party) and other socialist alliances in England, with which we have good relations. This Alliance consists of a third of non-aligned members, a third Cymru Goch and a third Socialist Party and along with the SWP stood on a United Socialist list for the Welsh Assembly in May 1999 (there was never any intention of standing for the May 1997 general elections). The alliance, despite problems, is continuing to develop and overcome the traditional sectarian divisions that have

plagued the left. Our results in the election were predictable given Plaid's play for the left-wing vote and our limited resources but we stood for tactical reasons—i.e. to get our message delivered free to half a million homes and lay down a marker that a socialist alternative exists to both New Labour and Plaid.

5. D is right, we haven't played a part in the anti-McDonalds campaign in Aberystwyth (because we've only got one member in Aber and he works long hours in a supermarket) and the Anti-Election Alliance would have been a bit strange to join given that we were standing as candidates in the Assembly. I could be equally critical of D, if I knew who s/he was, and ask about specific campaigns such as the Miners' Strike, the anti-poll tax struggle or various campaigns against opencast mining in both north and south Wales.

D questions our commitment to green, red and black politics, all aspects—along with our republicanism—that have been central to Cymru Goch since we were founded in 1988. I fully accept that we could have been more active at times but we all have commitments outside politics, whether work or family or something else (sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll). Unlike some left-wing sects we do not have any full-timers and none of our members could be termed lifestyleers.

6. "Many of the senior party members are academics" I take this to be a reference to T, a law lecturer. At the last Cymru Goch national committee meeting he attended, he was in the company of a journalist, a supermarket worker, a call-centre worker and a postal worker. All, alas, men and doubtless "sweaty rugby lads" (another lovely criticism we all enjoyed). But not academics.

7. Female membership—got me there. It's a problem for the left and Cymru Goch is part of that problem. Unfortunately there are no easy answers to that, although we are consciously trying to reach women e.g. our Socialist Campaign Against Low





Pay is attracting the support of many low-paid workers (mainly women) but I can't pretend that in itself is adequate. What would D's solution be?

8. The apologetic PS sounds as false as the rest of the letter. If you haven't fallen out with us, why write such a nasty piece and why personalise it with taunts about misogyny, rugby lads and academics?

Whatever our disagreements, I hope we can conduct them openly without resorting to anonymous smears that would do justice to the worst Stalinist disinformation. We have an open letters page in *Y Faner Goch* and have subsequently put D's unedited letter on that page. Please write again D—it will help sharpen the debate amongst the sweaty rugby lads—but don't try to do us down in the radical environmentalist movement without just cause.

Pob hwyl—all the best,

M

For Cymru Goch/Welsh Socialists

PO Box 661

Wrecsam LL11 1QU

Wales



**Err...**

Dear *Do or Die*,

I write in response to the letter 'Welsh Authoritarians?' published in *Do or Die* No. 8 (p.335). Sadly, your correspondent's indictment of both Cymru Goch and the Scottish Republican Party is quite correct. I say sadly because, as a Welsh speaker, there is much to commend in both groups' analysis of cultural and economic oppression of the Celtic peoples of the 'UK'. Cymru Goch's 'Off Our Backs—Wales a Colony', for example, remains a classic piece of liberation writing and one which the counterculture and anarchists would undoubtedly agree with.

Unfortunately, the gulf between the theory and practice of the groups is vast. Cymru Goch in

particular veers between support for reformist nationalist campaigns and the revolutionary DIY ethos, giving it a meandering split personality, advocating 'direct action' but towards nebulously liberal ends. Anti-traveller bigotry, homophobia and sexism are quite commonplace in their meetings and, for all the rhetoric, grassroots ecological resistance is regarded as a trivial matter, secondary to the important task of regimenting the proletariat. Hey, even the SWP regard them as authoritarian!

Well, I've rattled on enough. I don't like writing letters and indeed I know for a fact that there are good individual activists in Cymru Goch, just as there are in SWP, Socialist Party, AWL et al. But we should always be wary of Leninist/Trotskyist organisations, even when they do adopt the language of anarchism.

Yr Eiddoch Gywir,

RP

## Root out this Fluffy Menace

Dear all,

Towards the end of May Day, I was standing on a gritting box opposite the Black Prince, Lambeth, selling *Green Anarchist* (GA) to the tail end of the Brockwell Park-bound march. 'Heavy Metal' (blond, pony tail, blue shirt and jeans) came up ranting about 'violence', thumped my leg, and then joined his 20-something mates up the road. On going that way to rejoin the march, I was surrounded by a mob led by one Craig or Greg (face paint, white clown wig, black baseball cap) who was screaming "You cost us Solsbury Hill, you wanker!" and other incoherences. While three jostled and abused me, tried to grab my papers and otherwise attempted to provoke me to violence, their female cohort videoed it. Having failed to get my last GA off me by force, the self-styled 'fluffies' resorted to trickery. The crusty who'd been behind me went up the road pretending to want a paper. Having got hold of the GA, he handed it to 'Heavy Metal' who ran to the cops with it, unsuccessfully demanding they arrest me for the 'violent' Seattle story on the front page.

This incident wasn't the only one that day. Also on Black Prince Road, a lad told me he'd been harassed by 'Crusty' for mentioning PC Blakelock and in Parliament Square some South Coast sabs were menaced by the so-called 'fluffies' for being masked up. One then impersonated a Guardian journalist and tried to interview the sabs to get their names etc.

I suspect they'd been harassing others all day as self-appointed 'peace police' and that they were behind incidents of demonstrators being unmasked or otherwise compromised on earlier big London demos too. If so, it's now more appropriate to talk about 'the fluffies' rather than 'fluffies' generally.



As individuals they're not distinctive, but they are as a group. From their obvious contradictions (e.g. attacking demonstrators in the name of non-violence, unmasking others whilst disguised themselves) and concerted tactics, some have suggested this group are agent provocateurs. My view is that they're the most E-damaged residue of the hard-line fluffy milieu that centred on the Rainbow Church, north London, during the mid-1990's anti-CJB period.

Regardless, they are compromising direct actionists, whether non-violent or otherwise, and should be identified and excluded from future demos. All information gratefully received via my correspondence address.

Yours—for the destruction of Civilisation,  
John Connor  
BCM 1715  
London WC1N 3XX



## Moaning Northern Monkeys

Dear Cabbage Heads,

Autonomous spaces are important, and it's good to give space in *Do or Die* to highlight this, but not when you get it all wrong, tell blatant untruths and say nothing of importance in your section on the OKasional cafe.

Contrary to your article (*Do or Die* No.8, p.130) in Manchester the buildings picked have not been squatted because of any specific features or "important points". We have often talked about resisting eviction, not 'cos we want to defend the individual squat, but instead for the demonstration value of lock on barrels and to be more overtly a reclaimed squatted space.

We've done much stuff in the six incarnations of the OKasional cafe, bringing the background politics of an autonomous and non-commercial space through it all. Food and drink by donation, organic beer, anarchy and squatting displays, bring and take stalls, library, kids' play area, action meeting point, live music, poetry and pancakes, performances, exhibitions, practical and info-based workshops, discussion groups, 3 course meals, activist socialising and access to all our other weird ideas and creativity. Why hell, we even squatted the Hacienda to build for J18, provide

training, and raise funds for RTS arrestees (though we ended up with more people nicked, and in debt!).

We have always had an explicitly 'no mainstream media' policy (the opposite of what you claimed), and for most of our squats we decided not to attend court and give legitimacy to the judicial system.

So put that in your radical Brighton pipe and smoke it.

The OKasional Cafe  
c/o Manchester EFI  
Dept 29  
22a Beswick Street  
Ancoats  
Manchester M4 7HS

*Editorial note: The piece on the Okasional cafe in Do or Die No.8 was lifted word-for-word from an interview with someone from Manchester involved with the cafe.*

## Battle of the Beards

Dear all,

Why the conspiracy of silence surrounding *Green Anarchist*? I don't get it. Why is no one ever prepared to tell them their magazine is shit? OK—people have, but only the sort of people who have always thought their magazine was shit, not anyone they might actually listen to.

Within the EFI network there seems to be this bizarre two-faced attitude; on the one hand almost everybody treats GA as a joke and pays very little attention to them, but on the other hand they are tolerated (largely because they are so ineffectual—the 'harmless nutters' theory) and no one ever expresses any of the criticisms they may have of them. This is our bizarre tolerance thing—is there anyone we wouldn't let join our club? Like you can advocate poison gas attacks on random commuters and no one will ever pull you up on it? What's that? So I could write leaflets advocating genocide or something and everyone would just snigger about it behind my back but not actually ever mention it to me. Is that any way to conduct revolutionary politics? Everything should surely be out in the open—air your differences. C'est nest pas?

Of course, I'm sure one of the reasons why no one ever says or does anything about it is because of The Feud—you know, the Stewart Home/Fabian Thomsett/Luther Blissett/Neolist attack on GA. A feud which has become so mind-bogglingly complex and has generated so many paranoid ramifications that only someone who was already mad (viz. the participants) or who wanted to be driven mad would ever dream of wading into it.

What seems glaringly obvious to me is that GA needed (and still needs) to be attacked, but that



Home/Thomsett/whoever were precisely the worst people in the world to do it, because they achieved the hitherto unimaginable feat of making GA look sane.

Surely, all that would be needed to attack GA, rather than some bizarre and complex feud, would be simply to quote back at them some of the unjustifiable things they have published and challenge them either to defend them or disown them, with no stupid prevarication or get-out clauses about "we publish anything that gets sent to us—haven't you ever heard of free speech?" or "I didn't say we should carry out poison gas attacks against commuters, only that IF someone did, we shouldn't oppose them and we shouldn't feel sorry for the victims either."

It's all rather a shame really, because lots of the stuff they publish is very intelligent and interesting, unfortunately it's all marred by the paranoid logic of conspiracy theory and by straight-out lunacy.

A note for foreign readers (especially Americans): I would just like to point out for any foreigners who might be reading this—GA has little or no credibility in the direct action movement here, everyone pretty much regards it as a joke. They print paranoid conspiracy ravings and straight-out lies about the state of the movement here and then send it all over the world. I just hope that overseas readers have enough discerning intelligence to figure out that it's put together by barkers who have no involvement in anything that's actually going on.

Yours,

A Zombie consumer who deserves his poison gas

## **Maolism Marches Forward!!!!**

Dear *Do or Die*,

Many Kudos to the Cats in Britain who saw beyond the limitations of Anarchism to embrace the People's War in Nepal... Mao said that the next 50-100 years would be the Strategic Offensive of the Proletariat, where we could actually sweep Imperialism and Reaction from the Global... with such analysis... Unity and Struggle is needed and the brothers and sister of *Do or Die* were open to this movement... this is a glorious time... the Mumia Struggle intensifies in the US and the US Imperialists have just sent their 1.3 billion dollars to the Butchers in Colombia to start Vietnam Part 2... the Mexican government, the Drug Government, is highly unstable and had to bailed out by the US Federal Banks and Fidel, yes a Revisionist, but still a fiery Nationalist, won't die and is receiving warm welcomes in the Latin Countries and Venezuela even boasts a warm leftist President... the stage is now set for Revolutionary Rebellion... making the 60s look like a tame parade... young urban Gangbangers in

America will be watching this and choosing sides... Maoist sides... needing and creating new structures... Cats in Palestine and those Northern Irish Neighborhoods and Brixton will be watching these developments... Unemployed Gangs of Proletarians will Rise... it's Great to See that with Red Mask and Molotov in Hand the Comrades from *Do or Die* will be on the Front Lines!!!!!! Long Live the Maoist Movements in Nepal, Peru, Turkey, Philippines, India ..... and the UK!!!!

Blair Burns, MAS LUCHA

Email: [BBurns352@aol.com](mailto:BBurns352@aol.com)

## **Italian Prisoner**

Dear *Do or Die*,

I'm an Italian forced guest of Her Majesty and I'm writing to you because I've started to translate some articles from *Do or Die* into Italian. I've got lots of friends in Italy that are interested in reading them, but unlucky not so many Italians understand English.

The Italian scene really needs some stimulus and ideas, particularly for ecology and occupation of sites and tree squatting. We can learn a lot from England. So I'm writing to let you know and I hope you don't mind. It'd really help me as well to use my time in a constructive way as I'm serving a four year sentence.

Thanks,

Barbara Donati EH 6437

HMP Cookham Wood

Rochester ME1 3LU

UK.





## UK Ecological Direct Action Groups

**Bath EFl**  
c/o PO Box 426  
Bath BA1 2ZD

**Bristol EFl**  
c/o Box 51  
Greenleaf Bookshop  
82 Colston Street  
Bristol BS1 5BB  
Tel: 0117 939 3093

**Cambridge EFl**  
Box E  
12 Mill Road  
Cambridge CB1 2AD

**Choltenham EFl**  
16 Portland Street  
Choltenham GL62 2PB  
Email: [hq@chelt-ef.freemove.co.uk](mailto:hq@chelt-ef.freemove.co.uk)

**Exeter Environmental Network**  
PO Box 185  
Exeter EX4 4EW

**Guildford EFl**  
PO Box 217  
Guildford GU1 1WS

**Gwynedd & Mon EFl**  
The Greenhouse  
1 Trevelyan Terrace  
Bangor LL57 1AX  
Tel: 01248 355821  
Email: [bangorwerdd@egroups.com](mailto:bangorwerdd@egroups.com)

**Hull On Earth**  
c/o PO Box 43  
Hull HU1 1AA

**Irwell Valley EFl**  
Dept 29  
22a Beswick Street  
Manchester M4 7HS  
Tel: 0161 226 6814  
Email: [ivf@nematode.freemove.co.uk](mailto:ivf@nematode.freemove.co.uk)

**LEAF**  
Box Z  
13 Biddulph Street  
Leicester LE2 1BH  
Tel: 0116 210 9652

**Leeds EFl**  
c/o CRC  
16 Sholebroke Avenue  
Leeds LS7 3HB  
Tel: 0113 262 9365  
Email: [leeds-ef@ukf.net](mailto:leeds-ef@ukf.net)  
Web: [www.leeds-ef.ukf.net](http://www.leeds-ef.ukf.net)

**Liverpool EFl**  
96 Bold Street  
Liverpool L1 4HY

**Manchester EFl**  
Dept 29  
22a Boswick Street  
Manchester M4 7HS  
Tel: 0161 226 6814  
Email: [manef@nematode.freemove.co.uk](mailto:manef@nematode.freemove.co.uk)  
Web: [www.snet.co.uk/ef/](http://www.snet.co.uk/ef/)

**Mid-Somerset EFl**  
PO Box 23  
5 High Street  
Glastonbury BA6 9PU

**Norwich Direct Action Forum**  
PO Box 487  
Norwich NR2 3AL  
Tel: 07931 308091  
Email: [directactionforum@egroups.com](mailto:directactionforum@egroups.com)

**Nottingham EFl**  
c/o The Rainbow Centre  
182 Mansfield Road  
Nottingham NG1 3HW  
Tel: 0115 958 5666

**Oldham EFl**  
PO Box 127  
Oldham OL4 3FE

**Oxford EFl**  
c/o PO Box 68  
Oxford OX3 1RH

**Reclaim the Streets**  
PO Box 9656  
London N4 4JY  
Tel: 020 7281 4621  
Email: [rts@gn.apc.org](mailto:rts@gn.apc.org)  
Web: [www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

**Reclaim the Valleys**  
c/o Swansea Environment Centre  
Pier Street  
Swansea SA1 1RY

**Reading Roadbusters**  
RIS Centre  
35-39 London Street  
Reading RG1 4PS  
Tel: 0118 954 6430  
Email: [roadbusters@clara.net](mailto:roadbusters@clara.net)

**Sheffield EFl**  
c/o Brambles Resource Centre  
82 Andover Street  
Sheffield S3 9EH  
Tel: 0114 2797164  
Email: [lmthackery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lmthackery@yahoo.co.uk)

**South Devon EFl**  
PO Box 77  
Totnes TQ9 5ZJ  
Tel: 01803 840 098

**Swansea People EFl**  
c/o Green Action  
Swansea University SU  
Swansea  
Wales

**Tyneside Action for People and Planet**  
PO Box 1TA  
Newcastle NE99 1TA  
Email: [tapp@newcastle54.freemove.co.uk](mailto:tapp@newcastle54.freemove.co.uk)

**Warwick EFl**  
c/o Green Society  
Warwick USU  
Coventry CV4 7AL  
Email: [suag@csy.warwick.ac.uk](mailto:suag@csy.warwick.ac.uk)

**Wolves Eco Action**  
c/o Wolves Hunt Saboteurs  
Wolves USU  
Wulfruna Street  
Wolverhampton WV1 1LY

**York EFl**  
c/o SU Centre  
University of York  
York YO10 5DD

## Other UK Contacts

**Advisory Service for Squatters**  
2 St Pauls Road  
London N1 2QN  
Tel: 020 7359 8814  
Email: [advice@squat.freemove.co.uk](mailto:advice@squat.freemove.co.uk)  
Web: [www.squat.freemove.co.uk](http://www.squat.freemove.co.uk)  
Excellent long running legal and practical help for squatters.

**Anarchist Federation**  
c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX  
Tel: 07946 214 590  
Email: [anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com](mailto:anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com)  
Web: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
The renamed Anarchist Communist Federation. Also produce a newsletter and magazine.

**Anarchist Teapot Mobile Kitchen**  
Box B  
21 Little Preston Street  
Brighton BN1 2HQ  
Email: [katchop22@chickmail.com](mailto:katchop22@chickmail.com)  
Cheap, organic, vegan food with grumpy salad, a punk music side dish and an anarchist bookstall for afters. Available for most political events.



**Anti-Fascist Action**

BM 1734  
London WC1N 3XX  
Tel: 07000 569569  
Political and physical confrontation  
to the far right. Also produce  
*Fighting Talk* magazine.

**Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh**

17 West Montgomery Place  
Edinburgh EH7 5HA  
Tel: 0131 557 6242  
Web: [www.autonomous.org.uk](http://www.autonomous.org.uk)  
Draws together many campaigns for  
social and ecological issues into a  
revolutionary struggle to overthrow  
capitalism (Innit?).

**Blatant Incitement Collective**

Dept 29  
22a Beswick Street  
Manchester M4 7HS  
Tel: 0161 226 6814  
Email: [doitit@nematode.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:doitit@nematode.freeserve.co.uk)  
Encourages people to organise  
themselves ecologically and without  
hierarchy by sharing skills,  
knowledge and inspiration.

**Brighton Against Benefit Cuts**

c/o BHUWC  
4 Crestway Parade  
Brighton BN1 7BL  
Email: [babc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:babc@yahoo.co.uk)  
Resistance to all attacks on  
benefits. Also produce occasional  
newsletter and act as an excellent  
information point.

**CAGE**

c/o 182 Mansfield Road  
Nottingham NG1 3HW  
Tel: 07931 401 962  
Email: [prison@anarchy.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:prison@anarchy.fsnet.co.uk)  
Web: [www.veggies.org.uk/cage](http://www.veggies.org.uk/cage)  
A relatively new group/network  
resisting all manifestations of the  
prison state.

**Campaign Against the Arms Trade**

11 Goodwin Street  
London N4 3HQ  
Tel: 020 7281 0297  
Email: [enquiries@caat.demon.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@caat.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.caat.demon.co.uk](http://www.caat.demon.co.uk)  
Broad coalition of people seeking an  
end to the UK's role in the  
international arms trade.

**Campaign to Close Campsfield**

c/o 111 Magdalen Street  
Oxford OX4  
Tel: 01865 558145  
Web: [www.closecampsfield.org.uk](http://www.closecampsfield.org.uk)  
Regular demonstrations and other  
events to close Campsfield  
immigration detention centre.

**Class War**

PO Box 467  
London E8 3QX  
Tel: 01582 750601  
Email: [class\\_war@geocities.com](mailto:class_war@geocities.com)  
Infamous anarchists of the 80s.  
Also produce regular anarcho-tabloid  
of the same name.

**Chlapas Link**

c/o Box 79  
Greenleaf  
Bristol BS1 5BB  
Email: [chlapaslink@yahoo.com](mailto:chlapaslink@yahoo.com)  
Excellent information about, and  
radical support for, the Zapatista  
struggle in Mexico.

**Disabled Action Network**

3 Crawley Street  
London N22 6AN  
Tel: 020 8889 1361  
Direct action by and for disabled  
people.

**English Collective of Prostitutes**

PO Box 287  
London NW6 5QU  
Tel: 020 7482 2496  
A network of women working at  
various levels in the sex industry.

**5th May Group**

PO Box 2474  
London N8 OHW  
Tel: 020 8374 5027  
Kurdish and Turkish anarchists in  
exile. Campaign on local issues and  
compulsory Turkish military service.

**56a Infoshop**

56 Crampton Street  
London SE17  
Email: [56a@safetycat.org](mailto:56a@safetycat.org)  
Web: [www.safetycat.org/56a](http://www.safetycat.org/56a)  
Radical bookshop, wholefood co-op  
and bike workshop.

**Friends, Families and Travellers**

Community Base  
113 Queens Road  
Brighton BN1 3XG  
Tel: 01273 234777  
Working towards a society where  
travellers can live on the road  
without fear of prosecution and  
harrassment.

**Friends of People Close to Nature**

33 Gould Close  
Welham Green  
Hatfield  
Hertfordshire AL9 7EB  
Tel: 01707 885 994  
Email: [rains@fpcn-global.org](mailto:rains@fpcn-global.org)  
Web: [www.fpcn-global.org](http://www.fpcn-global.org)  
Independent group working to  
support the struggles of indigenous  
peoples against development.

**Genetic Engineering Network**

PO Box 9656  
London N4 4JY  
Tel: 020 7690 0626  
Email: [genetics@gn.apc.org](mailto:genetics@gn.apc.org)  
Web: [www.geneticsaction.org.uk](http://www.geneticsaction.org.uk)  
Information collection and  
distribution point for all aspects of  
the anti-biotech resistance.

**Haringey Solidarity Group**

PO Box 2474  
London N8 OHW  
Tel: 020 8374 5027  
Email: [hsg@clara.net](mailto:hsg@clara.net)  
Established local radical group. Also  
produces *Haringey Community  
Action* newsletter.

**Hunt Saboteurs Association**

PO Box 2786  
Brighton BN2 2AX  
Tel: 01273 622827  
Email: [info@huntsabs.org.uk](mailto:info@huntsabs.org.uk)  
Web: [www.huntsabs.org.uk](http://www.huntsabs.org.uk)  
A nationwide network of groups  
using direct action to stop fox  
hunting. Also produces the  
publication *Howl*.

**I-Contact Video Network**

76 Mina Road  
Bristol BS2 9TX  
Tel: 0117 914 0188  
Email: [i-contact@videonetwork.org](mailto:i-contact@videonetwork.org)  
Autonomous and independent video  
production by activists.

**Industrial Workers of the World**

Secular Hall  
75 Humberside Gate  
Leicester LE1 1WB  
Tel: 0116 266 1835  
Revolutionary union whose aim is to  
gain control of workplaces and  
eliminate the bosses.

**Kate Sharpley Library**

BM Hurricane  
London WC1N 3XX  
Email: [kar98@bt.dial.pipex.com](mailto:kar98@bt.dial.pipex.com)  
The most extensive collection of  
anarchist material in the UK.

**Kebele Community Centre**

14 Robertson Road  
Eastville  
Bristol BS5 6JY  
Tel: 0117 939 9469  
Web: [www.marsbard.com/kebele](http://www.marsbard.com/kebele)  
Ex-squatted social centre.

**Lancaster Anarchist Group**

c/o Single Step Co-op  
The Basement  
78a Penny Street  
Lancaster LA1 1XN  
Anarchist group active in many  
struggles.



**London Animal Action**  
 BM Box 2248  
 London WC1N 3XX  
 Tel: 020 7278 3068  
 Email: [laa@londonaa.demon.co.uk](mailto:laa@londonaa.demon.co.uk)  
 Web: [www.londonaa.demon.co.uk](http://www.londonaa.demon.co.uk)  
 Local animal rights group. Contact for details of other local groups around the country.

**Movement Against the Monarchy**  
 PO Box 14672  
 London E9 5UQ  
 Tel: 07931 301901  
 Class War-related royal-hating roustabouts.

**Newham Monitoring Project**  
 63 Broadway  
 Stratford  
 London E15 4BQ  
 Tel: 020 8555 8151  
 Email: [nmp@gn.apc.org](mailto:nmp@gn.apc.org)  
 Community group giving support, advice and campaigning on issues of racial harassment and civil rights.

**No Opencast**  
 28 Wandle Road  
 London SW17 7DW  
 Tel: 020 8672 9698  
 Campaigning against opencast mining and networking information between similar groups.

**1 in 12 Club**  
 21-23 Albion Street  
 Bradford BD1 2LY  
 Tel: 01274 734160  
 Anarchist-managed social centre with cheap beer, punk gigs, information and resources.

**OPM Support Group**  
 c/o 43 Gardner Street  
 Brighton BN1 1UN  
 Email: [opmsg@eco-action.org](mailto:opmsg@eco-action.org)  
 Web: [www.eco-action.org/opm/](http://www.eco-action.org/opm/)  
 Practical solidarity with the indigenous people of West Papua. Produces occasional newsletter.

**PaRTIZans**  
 41a Thornhill Square  
 London N1 1BE  
 Tel: 020 7700 6189  
 Email: [partizans@gn.apc.org](mailto:partizans@gn.apc.org)  
 Fights against the mining activities of the corporation RTZ. Good information resource.

**Portsmouth Anarchist Network**  
 Box A  
 167 Fawcett Road  
 Southsea PO4 0DH  
 Discusses and organises support for prisoners, anti-militarism and workers in struggle.

**Primal Seeds**  
 Suite 305  
 255 Wilmslow Road  
 Manchester M14  
 Email: [mail@primalseeds.org](mailto:mail@primalseeds.org)  
 Web: [www.primalseeds.org](http://www.primalseeds.org)  
 Actively engaged in protecting biodiversity and creating local food security. Excellent anti-biotech resource.

**Radical Routes**  
 c/o CRC  
 16 Sholebroke Avenue  
 Leeds LS7 3HB  
 Tel: 0113 262 9365  
 Network of housing co-ops. Get the government to buy you a house—here's how!

**Rising Tide**  
 c/o Cornerstone Resource Centre  
 16 Sholebroke Avenue  
 Leeds LS7 3HB  
 Tel: 0113 262 9635  
 Campaign aimed at preventing the global ecological disasters that will be caused by climate change.



**Sexual Freedom Coalition**  
 PO Box 42B  
 London W1A 4ZB  
 Tel: 020 7460 1979  
 Campaigns against laws restricting all adult consensual sexual activity.

**Simon Jones Memorial Campaign**  
 PO Box 2600  
 Brighton BN2 2DX  
 Tel: 01273 685913  
 Web: [www.simonjones.org.uk](http://www.simonjones.org.uk)  
 Campaigns for Simon who was killed on his first day at work, and to defeat casualised labour.

**Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty**  
 PO Box 381  
 Cheltenham  
 Gloucestershire GL50 1UF  
 Tel: 0121 632 6460

Email: [info@shac.u-net.com](mailto:info@shac.u-net.com)  
 Aims to close down Huntingdon Life Sciences, Europe's biggest animal testing laboratory.

**Solidarity Federation**  
 PO Box 29  
 Manchester M15 5HW  
 Tel: 0161 232 7889  
 Small network of anarcho-sindicalists.

**TAPOL**  
 111 Northwood Street  
 Thornton Road  
 Surrey CR7 8HW  
 Tel: 020 8771 2904  
 Email: [tapol@gn.apc.org](mailto:tapol@gn.apc.org)  
 Web: [www.gn.apc.org/tapol](http://www.gn.apc.org/tapol)  
 The Indonesian human rights campaign. Has details of current situation in East Timor, West Papua, etc. Also produces newsletter.

**Third Battle of Newbury**  
 PO Box 5842  
 Newbury RG14 5WG  
 Tel: 07000 785201  
 Email: [thirdbattle@hotmail.com](mailto:thirdbattle@hotmail.com)  
 Continued resistance to road construction.

**Undercurrents**  
 16b Cherwell Street  
 Oxford OX4 1BG  
 Tel: 01865 203662  
 Email: [underc@gn.apc.org](mailto:underc@gn.apc.org)  
 Web: [www.undercurrents.org](http://www.undercurrents.org)  
 No longer a video magazine—camcorder-activism has now blasted off into cyberspace and mutated into 'pirate TV'.

**URGENT**  
 16b Cherwell Street  
 Oxford OX4 1BG  
 Tel: 01865 714800  
 Email: [info@urgent.org.uk](mailto:info@urgent.org.uk)  
 Web: [www.urgent.org.uk](http://www.urgent.org.uk)  
 Resistance to housing developments on green field sites.

**West London Anarchists and Radicals**  
 c/o BM Makhno  
 London WC1N 3XX  
 Email: [war1921@attavista.com](mailto:war1921@attavista.com)  
 Local class struggle anarchist/communist group. Produce bi-monthly newsletter.

**Worthing Anarchist Teapot**  
 c/o PO Box 4144  
 Worthing BN14 7NZ  
 Email: [teapot@worthing.eco-action.org](mailto:teapot@worthing.eco-action.org)  
 Provides free tea and coffee plus anarchist/radical literature from squats and town centre stalls.



## UK Newsletters and Bulletins

### Action South West

Box 80  
Greenleaf  
82 Colston Street  
Bristol BS1 5BB  
Tel: 07931 268966  
Email: [actionsouthwest@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:actionsouthwest@yahoo.co.uk)  
The excellent and free West Country newsletter—formerly known as the *West Country Activist*. Covers international, national and local direct action and related events with a radical edge. Has good regional contacts and diary dates.

### Bristol

Box 25  
Greenleaf  
82 Colston Street  
Bristol BS1 5BB  
Email: [bristol@network.com](mailto:bristol@network.com)  
Web: [www.bristol.co.uk](http://www.bristol.co.uk)  
More eco/anarcho direct action news and views with a local focus from the sorted and prolific Bristol crew.

### Counter Information

c/o 17 West Montgomery Place  
Edinburgh EH7 5HA  
Tel: 0131 557 6242  
Newsletter produced by an independent collective based in Central Scotland. Carries news of struggles against injustice, oppression and exploitation.

### Earth First! Action Update

c/o PO Box 1TA  
Newcastle NE99 1TA  
Email: [actionupdate@gn.apc.org](mailto:actionupdate@gn.apc.org)  
Web: [www.eco-action.org/efau](http://www.eco-action.org/efau)

The newsletter of the UK radical eco-network. Carries reports of actions, events listings and group contact details.

### Eroding Empire

c/o 56a Infoshop  
56a Crampton Street  
London SE17  
A DIY bulletin and listing of gigs, actions, classified ads and events for the London area.

### Genetix Update

c/o Totnes Genetics Group  
PO Box 77  
Totnes  
Devon TQ9 5ZJ  
Tel: 01803 840098  
Email: [info@togg.org.uk](mailto:info@togg.org.uk)  
Web: [www.togg.org.uk](http://www.togg.org.uk)  
Regular newsletter round up of anti-genetics activism in the UK and biotech-related news from around the world. Carries contacts for local anti-genetics groups around the UK.

### The Loombreaker

c/o Manchester EFI  
Dept 29  
22a Beswick Street  
Manchester M4 7HS  
Tel: 0161 226 6814  
Inspiring radical local direct action focussed newsletter.

### Ned Ludds News

c/o The Rainbow Centre  
182 Mansfield Road  
Nottingham NG1 3HW  
Local newsletter with radical direct action news.

### Oxyacetylene

Box G  
111 Magdalen Road  
Oxford OX4 1RQ  
Email: [oxace@hotmail.com](mailto:oxace@hotmail.com)  
Local community action newsletter.

### The Porkbolter

PO Box 4144  
Worthing BN14 7NZ  
Email: [porkbolter@worthing.eco-action.org](mailto:porkbolter@worthing.eco-action.org)  
Radical local newsletter with historically vindicated pig obsession. Amongst other things it rages against CCTV, big business, local council corruption and the cops.

### Resist@nce

84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX  
Tel: 07946 214590  
Email: [anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com](mailto:anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com)  
Web: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
Monthly newsletter from the Anarchist Federation. Has news and comments on UK and overseas struggles, as well as an events diary and brief contacts listing.

### SchNEWS

PO Box 2600  
Brighton BN2 2DX  
Tel: 01273 685913  
Email: [schnews@brighton.co.uk](mailto:schnews@brighton.co.uk)  
Web: [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)  
Cheeky weekly newsletter covering all sorts of eco/anarcho direct action news from all round the world.

## International Contacts

### ASEED Europe

PO Box 92066  
1090 AB Amsterdam  
Netherlands  
Tel: (+31) 20 668 2236  
Email: [aseedeur@antenna.nl](mailto:aseedeur@antenna.nl)  
Web: [www.antenna.nl/aseed](http://www.antenna.nl/aseed)

### Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous

POB 11331  
Eugene OR 97440  
USA

### Autonomous Green Action

POB 4721  
Station E  
Ottawa  
Ontario K1S 5H9  
Canada  
Email: [sov@igs.net](mailto:sov@igs.net)

### Crimethinc HQ

2695 Rangewood Drive  
Atlanta GA 30345  
USA

### Czech Republic EFI

Země Predevsiml  
PO Box 237  
16041 Prague 6  
Czech Republic  
Email: [zemepredevsim@ecn.cz](mailto:zemepredevsim@ecn.cz)  
Web: [www.ecn.cz/zemepredevsim](http://www.ecn.cz/zemepredevsim)

### Earth Action!

POB 181034  
Dalbridge  
Durban 6016  
South Africa

### Ecodefence!

Moskovsky Prospekt  
120 34236006  
Kaliningrad/Koonigsburg  
Russia  
Email: [ecodefence@glas.apc.org](mailto:ecodefence@glas.apc.org)

### EFI Campaign East M. MLA

PO Box 176  
Taguig Central PO  
1632 Taguig  
Metro Manila  
Philippines

### FZLN

Calle Zapotecos 7 Bis  
Colonla Obreras  
Del Cuauhtemoc  
Mexico  
Tel: (+52) 5 761 4236



**Green Action Israel**  
PO Box 4611  
Tel-Aviv 61046  
Israel  
Tel: (+972) 3 516 2349  
Email: [info@greenaction.org.il](mailto:info@greenaction.org.il)  
Web: [www.greenaction.org.il](http://www.greenaction.org.il)

**Groene Front!**  
Postbus 85069  
3058 AB Utrecht  
Netherlands  
Email: [groenfr@dds.nl](mailto:groenfr@dds.nl)

**Kamunist Kranti/Collectivities**  
Majdoor Library  
Autopin Jhuggi  
NIT Farbad 121001  
India  
Email: [revolvertylon@hotmail.com](mailto:revolvertylon@hotmail.com)

**Malaysia EFI**  
c/o Muhamad Kamal Bin Ishak  
No. 2A Jalan Kampong Chachar  
Kuala Jempol  
72100 Bahau

N. Sembilan DK  
West Malaysia  
Malaysia  
Email: [kamal\\_ishak@hotmail.com](mailto:kamal_ishak@hotmail.com)

**Miljoaktivisten**  
Box 4181  
203 13 Malmö  
Sweden  
Email: [miljoaktivisten@usa.net](mailto:miljoaktivisten@usa.net)  
Web:  
[www.motkraft.net/miljoaktivisten](http://www.motkraft.net/miljoaktivisten)

**Movimento Sem Terra**  
Alameda Barão de Limeira  
1232 01202-002  
São Paulo  
Brasil  
Tel: (+55) 11 3361 3866  
Email: [semterra@mail.sanet.br](mailto:semterra@mail.sanet.br)

**Rainbow Keepers**  
POB 14  
Nizhni Novgorod 603082  
Russia  
Tel: (+7) 8312 34 32 80

**Paria Collective**  
PO Box 1332  
3500 BH Utrecht  
Holland

**Poland EFI**  
PO Box 40  
43-304 Bielsko-Biala 4  
Poland  
Tel: (+48) 33 183 153  
Email: [waplenica@pnw.most.org.pl](mailto:waplenica@pnw.most.org.pl)

**Ya Bastal**  
Via Watteau 7  
20125  
Milano  
Italy  
Tel: (+39) 02 670 5185  
Email: [yabasta@tin.it](mailto:yabasta@tin.it)

**Zi a Nechaj Zit**  
PO Box 18  
Bratislava  
840 08  
Slovak Republic  
Email: [mail@zanz.sk](mailto:mail@zanz.sk)

## Journals, Magazines and Publishing Projects

**Anarcho-Syndicalist Review**  
PO Box 2824  
Champaign IL 61825  
USA  
Formerly the *Liberarian Labour Review*.

**Anarchy—A Journal of Desire Armed**  
CAL Press  
POB 1446  
Columbia MO 65205-1446  
USA  
Neither left nor right, but an anti-ideological, pro-anarchy, anti-civilisation magazine.

**Animal**  
PO Box 467  
London E8 3QX  
UK  
Tel: 07931 301901  
Email:  
[animal\\_magazine@hotmail.com](mailto:animal_magazine@hotmail.com)  
"The magazine whose layout marginally improves with each issue". Ex-Class War zine featuring a regular diet of rioting, football, animal liberation and more football.

**Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group**  
BCM Box 1160  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Email:  
[1003021616@compuserve.com](mailto:1003021616@compuserve.com)  
News, articles and action reports from the ALF with good prisoner support stuff.

**Antagonism Press**  
c/o BM Makhno  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Email: [antagonism1@yahoo.com](mailto:antagonism1@yahoo.com)  
Web:  
[www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909)  
Communist propagandists. Published *Beasts of Burden* and re-printed *The Eclipse and Re-Emergence of The Communist Movement* among others.

**Arkangel**  
BCM 9240  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Regular fat animal liberation magazine. News, articles and contacts. Read and feel the cops fume.

**Aufheben**  
BHUWC  
4 Crestway Parade  
Brighton BN1 7BL  
UK  
Email: [aufheben99@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aufheben99@yahoo.co.uk)  
Web:  
<http://lists.village.virginia.EDU/~spoons/auf.html#auf1edit.htm>  
Influential autonomist mag. Latest issue with huge article analysing the Zapatistas—cutting through the bullshit, putting the uprising in context and getting to grips with the muddled responses of lefties, liberals and academics.

**The Bad Days Will End!**  
Merrymount Publications  
PO Box 441597  
Somerville MA 02144  
USA  
Email: [bronterre@earthlink.net](mailto:bronterre@earthlink.net)  
New-ish council communist magazine. "We are driven by the very conditions of our existence to acts of defiance"—couldn't have put it better myself mate.

**Bark!**  
PO Box 738  
New York NY 10025  
USA  
Tel: (+1) 212 866 6602  
A non-sectarian journal of anarcho-cynicism aimed at "defacing the currency of civilisation".

**The Black Clad Messenger**  
c/o POB 11331  
Eugene OR 97440  
USA  
A no compromise anarchist zine looking forward to industrial collapse with gleeful relish.

**Black Flag**  
BM Hurricane  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Email: [blackflageds@hushmail.com](mailto:blackflageds@hushmail.com)  
Web:  
<http://flag.blackened.net/blackflag/>  
Class struggle anarchist publication with strong international coverage.



**Blu**  
Robertsbridge  
TN32 5DR  
UK  
Tel: 01580 88 33 44  
Email: [ilandsel@blumagazine.net](mailto:ilandsel@blumagazine.net)  
Web: [www.blumagazine.net](http://www.blumagazine.net)  
Hand stitched, high quality US  
magazine full of black  
revolutionaries, radical hip-hop and  
prisoner support. Distributed here by  
commune-dwelling Mennonites. And  
you get a free CD with every issue!

**Cansolidated**  
1782 Venables  
Vancouver V5L 2H4  
Canada  
Tel: (+1) 250 653 2439  
Email: [cansolidated@tao.ca](mailto:cansolidated@tao.ca)  
News of direct action campaigns  
throughout Canada.

**CARF (Campaign Against Racism  
and Fascism)**  
BM Box 8784  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Tel: 020 7837 1450  
Email: [info@carf.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@carf.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.carf.demon.co.uk](http://www.carf.demon.co.uk)  
Britain's only independent anti-racist  
magazine. Covers black prisoners,  
miscarriages of justice, immigration  
detainees etc.

## UK Distributors

For a catalogue or listing of  
anarchist and radical books,  
pamphlets and more, send an  
A4 SAE to:

**Active Distribution**  
BM Active  
London WC1N 3XX  
Web: [www.activedistribution.org](http://www.activedistribution.org)

**AK Distribution**  
PO Box 12766  
Edinburgh EH8 9YE  
Tel: 0131 555 5165  
Email: [ak@akadn.demon.co.uk](mailto:ak@akadn.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.akuk.com](http://www.akuk.com)

**Counter Productions**  
PO Box 558  
London SE5 0RL

**Freedom Press**  
84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX  
Tel: 020 7247 9249

**Plain Wordz**  
PO Box 381  
Huddersfield  
HD1 3XX

**Collective Action Notes**  
POB 22962  
Baltimore MD 21203  
USA  
Email: [cansv@igc.org](mailto:cansv@igc.org)  
Occasional council communist  
newspaper with international reports  
and theory. No. 16/17 contains a  
huge article analysing the current  
balance of class forces in the US—  
the prison industrial complex, hidden  
resistance, hidden riots... Food for  
thought.

**Corporate Watch**  
16b Cherwell Street  
Oxford OX4 1BG  
UK  
Tel: 01865 791391  
Email: [mail@corporatewatch.org](mailto:mail@corporatewatch.org)  
Web: [www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org)  
The magazine *Corporate Watch* is no  
longer being produced as the group  
is concentrating more on the web  
site while still doing research,  
publishing occasional updates and  
briefing sheets.

**DELTA**  
Box Z  
13 Biddulph Street  
Leicester LE2 1BH  
UK  
Tel: 0116 210 9652  
Email: [lynx@gn.apc.org](mailto:lynx@gn.apc.org)  
Web: [www.oneworld.org/delta](http://www.oneworld.org/delta)  
Occasional magazine with news and  
information about the struggle  
against Shell and Big Oil in Nigeria.

**Direct Action**  
PO Box 29  
SW PDO  
Manchester M15 5HW  
UK  
Tel: 0161 232 7889  
Web: [www.directa.force9.co.uk](http://www.directa.force9.co.uk)  
Magazine of the anarcho-syndicalist  
Solidarity Federation.

**Down to Earth**  
59 Athenlay Road  
London SE15 3EN  
UK  
Tel: 020 7732 7984  
Email: [dte@gn.apc.org](mailto:dte@gn.apc.org)  
Web: [www.gn.apc.org/dte](http://www.gn.apc.org/dte)  
Newsletter of the International  
Campaign for Ecological Justice in  
Indonesia. An excellent source of  
information.

**Earth First! Journal**  
POB 3023  
Tucson AZ 85702  
USA  
Tel: (+1) 541 344 8004  
Email: [earthfirst@igc.org](mailto:earthfirst@igc.org)  
Web: [www.earthfirstjournal.org](http://www.earthfirstjournal.org)

Now in its twentieth year of  
publication this is the regular  
newspaper of EFI in North America  
and is getting more bad-ass by the  
day. Contains details for most active  
eco-anarcho and EFI groups in North  
America.

**The Ecologist**  
Unit 18  
Chelsea Wharf  
15 Lots Road  
London SW10 0QJ  
UK  
Tel: 020 7351 3578  
Email: [editorial@theecologist.org](mailto:editorial@theecologist.org)  
Glossy and mainstream ecological  
publication. And they pay to get their  
mailout done by prisoners.

**Elephant Editions**  
BM Elephant  
London WC1N 3XX  
UK  
Cool insurrectionalist anarchist  
publishing project. Send an SAE for  
a list of titles.

**Faslane Fokus**  
81d Shandon  
Helensburgh  
Scotland G84 8NT  
UK  
News, gossip and action reports  
from the anti-Trident submarine  
campaign at Faslane Peace Camp

**Feral**  
530 Divisadero  
Suite 321  
San Francisco CA 94117  
USA  
Email: [highwater@hotmail.com](mailto:highwater@hotmail.com)  
Fairly new US biocentric anarchist  
publication.

**Fifth Estate**  
4632 Second Avenue  
Detroit MI 48201  
USA  
Longest running anarchist paper in  
the USA. Contains articles on all  
aspects of anti-authoritarian activity  
and is known for its critiques of  
technology and civilisation.

**Freedom**  
84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX  
UK  
Tel: 020 7247 9249  
Web: [www.tao.ca/~freedom](http://www.tao.ca/~freedom)  
Going for years and it's still here—  
the fortnightly 'official' anarchist  
newspaper. Also publishes *The  
Raven*—a regular journal-style  
publication with articles about a  
different theme each issue.



### **Green Anarchist**

BM 1715

London WC1N 3XX

UK

Email: [greenanarchist@hotmail.com](mailto:greenanarchist@hotmail.com)  
Newspaper boldly subtitled "For the Destruction of Civilisation." What more can we say?

### **Green Anarchy**

c/o POB 11331

Eugene OR 97440

USA

Another Eugene esque publication from the West Coast radical green propaganda factory.

### **Green Pepper**

Postbus 94115

1090 GC Amsterdam

Netherlands

Tel: (+31) 20 665 7743

Email: [greenpepper@cyla.org](mailto:greenpepper@cyla.org)

Web: [www.cyla.org](http://www.cyla.org)

Quarterly eco-alternatives and direct action magazine with a Euro-slant.

### **Head**

BM Uplift

London WC1N 3XX

UK

Email:

[head@headmedia.demon.co.uk](mailto:head@headmedia.demon.co.uk)

Weird, wacky and wild journal. Sex, magic, literature, drugs and politics.

### **Killing King Abacus**

41 Stutter Street

PMB 1661

San Francisco CA 94104

USA

Email: [kk\\_abacus@yahoo.com](mailto:kk_abacus@yahoo.com)

Web: [www.geocities.com/kk\\_abacus](http://www.geocities.com/kk_abacus)

New anti-civilisation magazine produced annually. Loads of good stuff including translations from similar projects in Italy and some ELF communiques. Also produce regular *Hot Tide* bulletins.

### **Live Wild or Die!**

POB 58044

Minneapolis MN 55458

USA

Wild rampaging EFi friendly publication produced sort-of yearly (sounds familiar!). Machine smashing, anti biotech actions, food growing, wilderness defence, monkeywrenching tips, train-hopping, guns, bombs, riots, sex, eco-fuckers hitlist, mad graphics... (and a partridge in a pear tree).

### **Midnight Notes**

Box 204

Jamaica Plain

MA 02130

USA

Email: [midnotes@aol.com](mailto:midnotes@aol.com)

Web: [www.midnightnotes.org](http://www.midnightnotes.org)

Very Influential and long running autonomist journal. International class-struggle analysis from globalisation to the hidden history of resistance.

### **Morgenmuffel**

c/o Box B

21 Little Preston Street

Brighton BN1 2HQ

UK

lay's brilliant cartoon and rant zine—love, hate, humour, fighting, cookery, random riot pictures—what more could you want?

### **OFFi**

OCC SUNY Binghamton

Binghamton NY 13902

USA

Email: [offeditor@hotmail.com](mailto:offeditor@hotmail.com)

Official publication of the off-campus college meeting at the State University of New York! An anarchic, challenging and non-dogmatic read.

### **Organisel**

c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street

London E1 7QX

UK

Web: [www.afed.org](http://www.afed.org)

Regular theoretical magazine of the Anarchist Federation.

### **Revolt!**

PO Box 11331

Eugene OR 97740

USA

Web: [www.scottohara.com](http://www.scottohara.com)

Interesting and well produced anti-civilisation zine with pieces on various topics. Top website as well.

### **Squall**

PO Box 8959

London N19 5HW

UK

Email: [squall@squall.co.uk](mailto:squall@squall.co.uk)

Web: [www.squall.co.uk](http://www.squall.co.uk)

Yet another bunch of splitters to have abandoned print media for the virtual delights of cyber-publishing. They produce an occasional paper 'download' from the web for those of us still stuck banging rocks together.

### **Statewatch**

PO Box 1516

London N16 0EW

UK

Tel: 020 8802 1882

Email: [office@statewatch.org](mailto:office@statewatch.org)

Web: [www.statewatch.org](http://www.statewatch.org)

Monitoring the state and civil liberties in Europe. Excellent resource on what the security services and their friends are up to.

## **For More...**

Get *The Agitator!* a comprehensive and annually updated pamphlet with full contact details for most radical, anarchist and direct action groups, publications and centres in the world. Copies cost £1.30 (including postage) from: The Agitator, c/o PO Box 2474, London N8 OHW, UK.

### **Undercurrent**

c/o BHUWC

4 Crestway Parade

Brighton BN1 7BL

UK

Email: [undercurrent00@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:undercurrent00@yahoo.co.uk)

Web: [www.snpc.co.uk/undercurrent/](http://www.snpc.co.uk/undercurrent/)

Cutting criticisms of everything (including us, nurrani) from our very favourite autonomists.

### **Venomous Butterfly Publications**

41 Stutter Street

PMB 1661

San Francisco CA 94104

USA

A project producing various pamphlets, leaflets and articles with an anti-civilisation Insurrectionary anarchist perspective.

### **Willful Disobedience**

41 Stutter Street

PMB 1661

San Francisco CA 94104

USA

Subtitled "hopefully an anarchist monthly" this A4 magazine carries news and analysis of wild insurrectionary anarchist activity from all over the world.

### **Year Zero**

PO Box 26276

London W3 7GQ

UK

Email: [yearzero@flashmail.com](mailto:yearzero@flashmail.com)

Interesting newspaper produced by drop out journoes from *Loaded!* Noam Chomsky, John Pilger, lots of photos, lots of sarcasm—radical politics with a pop culture-ish style.







Do or Die is an annual journal crammed with reports and radical analysis from the worldwide ecological frontlines. In these times of concrete alienation here are voices that shine hope from movements taking action to defend nature, create revolution and re-wild humanity...

Inside...

- ★ Attacking the IMF and World Bank in Prague
- ★ Genetic Sabotage—The global fight against biotechnology
- ★ Struggles South of the Pyrenees—Reports from the Spanish state
- ★ Getting to grips with the new Terrorism Bill
- ★ An A-Z of top tips for planning direct action
- ★ Guerrilla? Gardening? The RTS action in London on May Day
- ★ An interview with two ex-Black Panthers
- ★ Running to Stand Still—Globalisation and the dole
- ★ News from the UK's direct action camps
- ★ Striking back against the prison state

Plus reviews, letters, contacts and more!